Zen Buddhism and Hasidism: A Comparative Study (review)

Steven Heine

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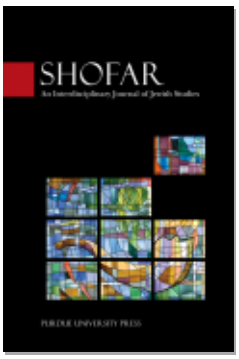

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Zen Buddhism and Hasidism: A Comparative Study, by Jacob Yuroh Teshima. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995. 187 pp. $48.00 (c); $29.50 (p).

The traditions of Zen Buddhism and Hasidism seem perfectly suited to a comparative study, though such an approach has for the most part been limited to brief comments by Zen scholars Heinrich Dumoulin and Masao Abe or Hasidic interpreter Martin Buber. Zen was founded in early T'ang China largely by itinerant monks and hermits who felt a need to step outside the confines of traditional forms of Buddhist monasticism that emphasized ritual or iconography as the key to religious pursuit. Centering on the role of the charismatic abbot who guided disciples with innovative pedagogical techniques including training in enigmatic spiritual dialogues or koans, Zen was primarily known for an emphasis on intensive, singleminded sitting-meditation or zazen lasting for prolonged periods of up to six, ten, or fourteen or more hours a day. Hasidism was founded a millennium later in Russia and Poland by Jews who, during a period of legalist control of religion after the disastrous messianic fervor of Zeviism, craved an experience of intense, personal enthusiasm. Led by Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and other charismatic rebbes who engaged in trance or glossolalia and were known as zaddiks or righteous souls, "Hasidism eventually created an unprecedented mass revival movement in Judaism" (p. 162). This was based on a continuing commitment to ecstatic prayer or devuquth realized in everyday activities.

Both movements were based on a utopian vision and the development of an extreme form of religious praxis outside conventional boundaries leading to an experience of the stillness or nothingness of the annihilation of selfhood. Zen and Hasidism, whose origins depended on charismatic leaders who manifested an inexpressible spiritual power, suffered many difficulties in their formative periods, including attacks from rivals within their religions as well as periods of governmental suppression. Eventually both groups prevailed as eminently viable and influential movements, though of decidedly minority status. Yet, despite the fact that both are hermetic groups with strong esoteric components, a major difference is that Zen is a monastic, celibate, otherwordly community, whereas Hasidism shares with mainstream Judaism an advocacy of family life and secular social responsibilities. Furthermore, as Teshima shows in this probing study, Hasidism remains grounded on a monotheistic goal of attaining a relation with God, while Zen has a monistic orientation based on the notion of the original purity of human nature which partakes of the universal Buddha-nature. In addition, Hasidism solves theoretical problems through metaphysical speculation, such as developing cosmological answers for the issue of theodicy, while Zen is anti-conceptual and anti-speculative, though this aspect of Zen ideology is somewhat overstated by Teshima, who appears more familiar with the Hasidic tradition and whose presentation at times does not deal fully with the complexities of Buddhist thought.

The main strengths of Teshima's approach are a familiarity with original language sources and secondary materials for both traditions, as well as an unbiased, non-judgmental standpoint that seeks access to the inner mysteries of religious life from a global, non-polemical perspective. After an introductory chapter that discusses the history of Zen and Hasidism, the next chapter focuses on the key issue of practice. It analyzes how zazen, which is not an ordinary method in the sense of a means to an end but is coterminous with ultimate reality, eliminates obstructions and allows a primordial awakening to unfold. Also devuquth, an old idea in Judaism which refers to cleaving to God and which in Kabbalah involved enormous concentration and devotion, was used in Hasidism in a simplified way as activities realized in daily community affairs. The main practices in Zen and Hasidism reduce the need or seek grounds for the dismissal of thought formation, though for different reasons.

At the same time, both traditions must explain and try to eliminate distractions or "strange thoughts," the topic of the third chapter. For Zen self-power practice, which was somewhat influenced by Pure Land other-power religiosity, distractions are extinguished through perpetual devotion to the Buddhist path renewed in each and every eternal moment. In Hasidism, this process depends on the Lurianic cosmological explanation of broken vessels which emphasizes that good and evil ultimately originated from the same divine root, so that "strange thoughts, though not welcomed, must be accepted and sanctified in order to sublimate them" (p. 67). Here Teshima's study is somewhat misleading and in need of a deeper understanding of the multifacetedness of the Zen approach and its origins in earlier forms of Buddhism, including the Theravada and Yogacara Abhidharma analysis of the factors of human existence. For example, it is too strong for Teshima to argue that "Zen Buddhism denies from the outset the significance of distracting thoughts" (p. 73). Rather Zen advocates the transmutation of all thought forms based on ignorance and attachment into expressions of enlightenment and compassion.

In the last three chapters, Teshima deals with how the traditions define humanity in terms of the goal of annihilating selfhood and the question of why people who are fundamentally good tend to evil behavior. In these chapters, Teshima reverses the pattern in the first half of the book and discusses Hasidism first, perhaps because he is on firmer ground in treating that tradition. Teshima examines how Hasids advocate *uniting oneself with* God rather than emphasizing the *unity of* God, as in mainstream Judaism. This is achieved not necessarily through seclusion, isolation, or the deprivation of all temptations, although that mode of religious life is not excluded altogether. Dov Baer's articulation of five stages of ecstasy culminating in singleness beyond reason and intellect is carefully examined. The issue of how a person could do evil despite having the divine spark within him relates back to the Lurianic view of the vessels and results in a constant struggle to live a righteous life in which "things of the world are never regarded as empty phenomena; each is a creation of God, serving Him according to its

own level" (p. 131). Similarly the experience of exile or *Galuth*, which is defined as physical separation from the holy land, psychological bitterness about inexplicable suffering, and a yearning to return, motivates the practitioner to "lift up the divine sparks" and redeem the presence of God or *Shekinah*. Although Hasidism seems like a throwback to traditional forms of religion, it makes a modern shift from a preoccupation with theology to anthropology.

Zen appears even more human-centered yet conceives of the absolute not as man versus a higher or even another power but as a natural state of "as it is-ness." For Zen, Teshima argues, there is no mention of extraordinary states for the notion that self-nature is identified with the universal essence (*Dharmakaya*), which encompasses the paradoxical unity of the cycle of birth-death (*shoji*) and timeless nirvana. Yet Teshima fails to discuss how sixth patriarch Hui-neng also identifies ordinary reality (*Nirmanakaya*) with the essence. Nor does he grapple with the issue of how Zen's assertion of man's original purity can lead to charges of antinomianism since the defilements of sin and transgression do not require eradication but are simply considered void of substance. Furthermore, Teshima's examination of the Zen view of uncertainty or instability, somewhat parallel to the notion of *Galuth*, needs to pay greater attention to the various views of impermanence (*mujo*) in classical Japanese culture. In general, his approach to Zen would greatly benefit from taking into account recent critical and revisionist studies, such as Bernard Faure's *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* (Princeton, 1991) and William Bodiford's *Soto Zen in Medieval Japan* (Hawaii, 1994), which help defeat stereotypical views of the tradition as one-sidedly iconoclastic and anti-conceptual.

A problem with this work is that the comparative sections of each chapter are rather weak. Teshima points out basic similarities and differences between Zen and Hasidism, but does not attempt to explore the story behind the story or to develop a religious dialogue in the manner of Buber, who was such an important influence on the author. For example, while the Kabbalistic roots of Hasidism are cited, there is no mention of how the origins of Zen were reliant on esoteric Buddhist theories and practices which influenced the understanding of zazen and koan training. Teshima deals almost entirely with theoretical writings of Zen, including important dialogues and anecdotes, but he does not explain the background of these sources in voluminous Zen histories (or, rather, hagiographical pseudohistories). On the other hand, there is no question that the main thrust of the book is innovative and insightful, and it should pave the way for future studies that focus on more specific topics of comparison.

Steven Heine
Department of Religious Studies
Florida International University

Judaism and Chinese Religion: A Prolegomenon to Any Future Dialogue

Jonathan R. Herman

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Judaism and Chinese Religion: A Prolegomenon to Any Future Dialogue

Jonathan R. Herman
Georgia State University

Given the theoretical affinities between Judaism and Chinese Religion, or between the Jewish and Chinese people, there has historically been little interaction between the two groups and even less rigorous comparative study. This essay establishes parameters for such a study, by examining how both traditions place primacy on collective identity and how their shared legacies of "peoplehood" shape interpretations of history, produce mythologies of unity, provide bases for family-centered ethics, and influence attitudes on education, outsiders, and the land. The essay concludes with a brief example of one unusual historical instance of dialogue between the two traditions.

Introduction

The relationship between Judaism and Chinese religion, or between the Jewish and Chinese people, is a complex affair. On the one hand, there has historically been relatively little interaction between the two traditions outside of a handful of isolated (though significant) anomalies. The once-thriving Jewish community in K'ai-feng did little to bring Jews and Chinese permanently into each other's consciousness, and occasions for constructive interfaith dialogue still seem so rare that the International Colloquium on Chinese and Jewish Culture was first convened only a few years ago.[1] But on the other hand, there is evidence, largely anecdotal, of some genuine and mutual affinity between Jews and Chinese. Jewish tourists flock to Xi'an to view the terra-cotta warriors, a considerable number of Jewish and Chinese intellectuals specialize in each other's traditions, and it is a common morsel of folk wisdom that Chinese restaurants thrive in Jewish communities. As might be expected in an era of burgeoning religious pluralism, encounters between the two worlds are becoming more commonplace, and it is thus appropriate to begin developing a critical intellectual perspective on the two traditions, in part as a matter of academic inquiry but also to lay some foundations that might assist with religious dialogue. Indeed, the time is ripe for such a study; a

[1]This four-day conference was held in Beijing in April 1992 under the joint auspices of the World Jewish Congress and the China International Culture Exchange Center. See Harold Kasimow, "Chinese-Jewish Colloquium in Beijing," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XXIX:1 (Winter 1992), pp. 140–141.

bibliography of Chinese-Jewish studies published just over a decade ago by the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong lists nearly three hundred Western and Chinese titles, though only three deal specifically with comparative topics.[2]

However, comparative study can be laden with many obstacles and pitfalls, and it is essential that this task be essayed with a great deal of caution so as not to replicate the problems of the past. As an academic discipline in the modern West, comparative religion was originally designed as a vehicle for examining how "other" religions challenged Christian self-understanding. Such endeavors could be alternately charitable or polemical, but in either case the assumption of Christian inviolability clearly determined how data would be interpreted. In a particularly striking document from not very long ago, a world religions textbook (based on a *Life Magazine* series) bestows the following "compliment" on a Chinese classic: "Occasionally the *Tao Te Ching* rises to heights surpassing all other teachings save those of Christ."[3] Such theological apologetics are less overt today, though they have often been replaced by a subtle type of perennialism, where all of the "major" religious traditions are viewed as variants of one generic type of truth-seeking, with certain recognizable patterns that occupy similar positions throughout the world and across the centuries. Here, comparative categories are forced, while genuine differences between traditions are glossed over in order to present a superficial unity. It is no wonder that so many religion scholars today cast a suspicious eye on comparative study and that others are taking it upon themselves to rehabilitate the approach.[4]

In order to establish some workable parameters for this essay—and possibly for the future of comparative religion in general—I would suggest that the most defensible intellectual purpose for comparing two phenomena is either to illustrate something

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[2]See Dennis A. Levinthal, *Sino-Judaic Studies: Whence and Whither* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Jewish Chronicle, 1985). The three comparative works are Harold Haifetz, *Zen and Hasidism* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1978); P. M. Cibot, "Parallèle des mœurs et usages des Chinois avec les mœurs et usages décrits dans le livre d'Esther," *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois* 14 (1789): 309–516; 15 (1791): 1–107; E. Zürcher, "Joodse religie en confucianismë," *Jodendom in China: Colloquium dd 28/29.11.1981* (Gent: Seminarium Cultuurgeschiedenia van Oost-Azie, 1984), pp. 35–49.

[3]"Religion in the Land of Confucius," *Life Magazine* (April 4, 1955), p. 70.

[4]A sequence of panels entitled "The Comparative Study of Religion: Contemporary Challenges and Responses" was conducted at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion in 1995 and 1996. The papers presented then, as well as some others, are slated to appear in a forthcoming volume edited by Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray, tentatively entitled *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religions in a Postmodern Age*. It is expected to include essays by both editors as well as Jonathan Z. Smith, Huston Smith, M. David Eckel, David White, Barbara Holdrege, Jonathan Herman, Winnifred Sullivan, Diana Eck, Lawrence Sullivan, William Paden, Elizabeth Pritchard, Laurie Patton, and Wendy Doniger.

significant about the particular that would not be readily accessible through regionalized area studies or to synthesize some new conclusions about the general case. That is to say, my goal of comparing Jewish and Chinese religiosity is to understand better the traditions themselves as well as the broader phenomenon of religion, if indeed such a thing really exists. Perhaps this should go without saying, but the temptation to interpret similarities as corroborating some universal truth or differences as fodder for religious polemics cannot be ignored. Complicating the matter further is some fuzziness of the boundaries between comparative religion and interfaith dialogue, the latter of which has often had its own troubled history of polemics and hidden theological motivations. As a person enters the comparative enterprise, he or she is implicitly taking part in a dialogue, and this (as anyone even remotely influenced by postmodernism would insist) will undoubtedly have some bearing on the "objective" study in which he or she is engaged. Conversely, an intentional participant in dialogue is implicitly compiling or building on comparative data, which likewise will influence the directions of the conversation. Not coincidentally, the guidelines established for comparative study are equally applicable to interfaith dialogue. The purpose of constructive dialogue—as opposed to just any generic interfaith interaction—is neither to turn the traditions on each other in a kind of theological competition nor to corroborate the traditions through a kind of theological bargaining to agreement. Dialogue is not about conversion; it is not about compromise. It is about understanding, of another person's tradition, and (by virtue of that) of one's own tradition, and of the larger phenomenon of religiosity. When a Jew identifies ways in which Chinese religion resonates or contrasts with Judaism, he or she may ultimately develop a new critical perspective on Judaism, including reconceptualizing existing practices and beliefs, attending to previously overlooked aspects of the tradition, and subjecting new ideas to Jewish interpretation. In any event, the participant in both comparative study and interfaith dialogue is obligated to approach the task with a modicum of critical self-awareness.

Perhaps the most common methodological problem dogging comparative study is the tendency to decontextualize the subject matter in the interest of convenience. There is a certain temptation to abstract a handful of doctrinal formulas, juxtapose citations from a few canonical texts, or extrapolate broad ethical norms, without necessarily examining how these relate to the actual lived experiences of the participants or accounting for internal diversity within the tradition. For example, a generic reference to "Jewish ethics" is so ambiguous as to be virtually useless, as it is unclear whether it refers to a particular line of Talmudic interpretation, the constitutional principles of modern Israel, the implicit social contracts of nineteenth-century Hasidim, the general moral patterns practiced by Jews in fourteenth-century Spain, or countless other highly specific phenomena. Moreover, a sweeping generalization (and typical textbook adage) such as "Jews do not eat pork" may be true to the Torah's dietary restrictions and to how members of the tradition prefer to envision themselves, but it fails to capture the

very real tension within Jewish communities between normative models and actual historical practice. So as to avoid these types of missteps, I examine in this essay only very elemental, foundational patterns in Jewish and Chinese experience, while striving both to put forth a sound phenomenological representation of the insider experience and to note inevitable distinctions between ideal and reality. Furthermore, the domain of "religion" addressed here is not limited to the conventional categories of deity, liturgical calendar, and so forth; it involves anything related to Tillich's notion of "ultimate concern," anything relevant to how Jews and Chinese discover or create *meaning* in their lives and make their worlds more intelligible. Finally, this essay will, for the most part, be concerned with Chinese religion in its totality, not the "religions" of China. Although Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism are correctly labeled the "three teachings" and frequently make up separate chapters of Western textbooks, they very seldom exist as isolated entities, and there are very few "pure" Taoists, Confucians, and Buddhists apart from those pursuing religious vocations. Chinese religion as practiced consists of a syncretic mixture of indigenous (often local) customs, a highly ordered general ethical substrate (which may be loosely termed "Confucian," though it actually predated Confucius himself), and a range of Buddhist, Taoist, and miscellaneous institutional resources that are employed as needed (or when deemed efficacious) by the people. It should be noted that this is not a case where the Chinese fail to respect the boundaries between traditions; it is a case where Western scholars, more familiar with the interactions among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have superimposed boundaries where they do not really exist. Because of this merging of traditions, it is really more appropriate to compare Judaism to the syncretic phenomenon of Chinese religion as a whole than to intellectual reifications like Confucianism, Taoism, or Buddhism.

The Implications of Jewish and Chinese Identity

Perhaps the most worthwhile starting point for comparison between Judaism and Chinese religion lies in a discussion not of God or metaphysics or salvation, but of a wholly existential concern: the primacy of collective identity. Both Jews and Chinese draw from their ethnic and cultural legacies a profound sense of "peoplehood," a sense of inheriting a timeless tradition, the perpetuation of which is often viewed as more significant than any of the specific details of that tradition. This is not merely a kind of generic ethnic pride; it is an experiential understanding that the broadly construed extended community is not a social or cultural contrivance, but somehow endowed with cosmic or ontological status. Just as Jews understand their place as God's "chosen people," as a group set apart to fulfill divine will and assume a unique place among the nations, so too the Chinese assume their own centrality, referring to their country traditionally as that which is "under heaven" (*t'ien-hsia*) and more recently as the "Middle Kingdom" (*chung-kuo*). One implication of this in both traditions, though for

different reasons, is the value placed on the land. As a people spending much of its history in exile, Jews have historically looked toward Israel as an almost eschatological reward; now that it has been established as a relatively stable homeland in the post-Holocaust era, Israel still triggers in most Jews a unique emotional response. By contrast, the Chinese have never been expelled from their country (though they have undergone the humiliation of repeated conquests), and they exhibit less a longing than an unstated satisfaction. This is often most evident in things that did not occur. For example, China has had a relatively uncolonialist history, which is surprising for a major military and population center, with Tibet and other so-called "autonomous regions" in western China being the most noteworthy modern exceptions. Another indication is an aesthetic one; unlike the Greeks, Indians, and ancient Israelites, the Chinese never developed epic literature, for they had no reason to imagine a hero searching for the center of the world, a spot which they supposedly already inhabited.

Incidentally, this idea that a people is in some way selected above all others or that a people somehow occupies the spiritual global center is one that does not always translate well, even to each other or to communities that may have similar notions. What insiders perceive as a source of affirmation and pride, outsiders are more inclined to perceive as ethnocentrism or xenophobia. And there may be more than a shred of truth to this in the history of both cultures, evident even in their colloquial language. Where Jews have sometimes spoken of *goyim* as a mildly patronizing reference to gentiles (whether implying the stereotype of old-money aristocrats or that of an uncultured rabble), Chinese originally referred to the nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples of the north by a term that best translates as "barbarians." Even today it is not entirely unusual for Chinese to speak of whites and blacks as "foreign demons."[5] It is an uncomfortable irony that the pride in peoplehood can sometimes result in attitudes and practices that others may find alienating.

Another important implication of the religious/ethnic/cultural identity is a widespread myth of unity, the idea that all the people of the tradition—no matter how temporally or spatially separate—still participate in a singular identity. It should be noted that the use here of the term "myth" does not imply that this notion of unity is a fiction; rather, it is a myth in the most pristine phenomenological meaning of the word, a deeply ingrained foundational truth that determines perceptions of reality and existence regardless of historical or anthropological evidence to the contrary. It is essential to Jewish identity that Jews globally make up a unified people, a theme that recurs

[5]Such terms were not reserved for the uneducated or the bigoted, as Confucius says, "Barbarian tribes with their rulers are inferior to Chinese states without them." Confucius, *The Analects*, tr. D. C. Lau (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 67.

in sermons and liturgy.[6] And though Jews work to celebrate the internal diversity, the tensions between orthodox and reform Jews, between Zionist and apolitical Jews, between devout Jews and secular Jews, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, are not always successfully finessed, and there is nothing more challenging to this ideal today than the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and other instances of Jew-on-Jew violence. It is equally important to Jewish experience that Jews throughout history have participated in this collectivity. Even as modern historical-critical Biblical scholarship indicates that the people of Israel underwent a long evolution of beliefs and practices from the patriarchal era to post-Exilic times, Jewish tradition still maintains that Abraham was the first monotheist, whose covenant with God has been handed down more or less unchanged for close to four millennia. It should be stressed that this point is being made here not to chide modern Jews as stubbornly holding to a fantasy in the face of objective evidence, but to take note of one aspect of the Jewish world view that explains a great deal of the Jewish religious imagination and social cohesiveness.

Similarly, the Chinese interpretation of their own history strongly indicates this myth of unity. Traditional Chinese accounts record a virtually uninterrupted series of dynasties stretching back to perhaps the third millennium B.C.E., although modern research and archaeology indicate that this too reflects a somewhat idealized memory. For example, two of the earliest dynastic lines probably existed simultaneously in adjacent states before one conquered the other and absorbed its customs and ideology. The victors evidently rewrote the events to appear as a generic dynastic succession, where the "mandate of heaven"—a cosmic justification for earthly responsibility—was simply transferred on moral grounds to a new ruling family, thus establishing the interpretation that would be held by subsequent generations. Along these same lines, China's dynastic cycle has actually included several periods of short-lived and competing dynasties, turbulent interregna between dynastic periods, and a number of times when invaders from the north—Jurchen, Khitan, Mongols, and Manchus—ruled all or significant parts of the country. Nevertheless, even these are remembered as ordinary wrinkles in the dynastic cycle, glossed over by such expressions as "period of disunion" or explained away as periods when "barbarians" underwent intentional sinicization and thus temporarily qualified for the heavenly mandate. This motif is visible today in several cases that are the result of China's interaction with the West. When defeated by the British in the Opium War just over a century ago, the Chinese feared more than anything that the country would suffer the fate of Europe, to be "sliced up like a ripe watermelon" into small autonomous states. The recent return of Hong Kong

[6]One popular interpretation of the Sukkoth prayer over the *lulav* is that it celebrates the unity of all Jews. It is even occasionally suggested that the Yom Kippur *Kol Nidre* prayer also expresses this theme.

to China in a "one country, two policies" compromise is the culmination of years of Chinese anguish that a chunk of the country had been amputated and effectively isolated from the whole. But the overarching assumption of Chinese unity is no more apparent than in the political posturing between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Both entities claim to be the legitimate voice of "China," which is why only one of them is entitled to membership in the United Nations, the P.R.C. having displaced Taiwan close to three decades ago. The idea that the "Taiwan problem" is a Chinese internal matter is not unique to the mainland; it is a common perspective on both sides of the Taiwan Strait that "there is only one China," a sentiment officially canonized in the landmark 1972 Joint Communique issued by the United States and the People's Republic. The newest challenge to Chinese unity is emigration. Now that Chinese communities have spread throughout Asia and more recently to the West, there is much speculation as to what contours a global pan-Chinese identity will eventually take.

Coupled in both traditions with this sense of a unified people stretching back to the mythic past is a deep respect for that past, a broadly held and largely unchallenged belief that the antiquity of the tradition is its best and only necessary justification. A recurring theme in Judaism (tracing at least as far back as the Mosaic era) is that the deity is the "God of our fathers," that the covenant and land are those given to the patriarchs. For many Jews, especially mainstream American Jews, there is the necessity to maintain certain bedrock practices—e.g., circumcising male children, attending synagogue on the high holidays, conducting a Seder on Passover, lighting candles on Hanukkah, etc.—not for especially theological reasons, but because the traditions have commanded Jewish loyalty for centuries and successfully withstood the test of time and the burdens of antisemitism. Ironically, as Jewish scholars and religious leaders are encouraging universities across the country to discontinue the christocentric practice of referring to the Hebrew Bible as the "Old Testament," most Jewish lay persons do not perceive the label as problematic, because it is precisely that the book is *old* that indicates its authenticity.

On the Chinese side, the respect for antiquity is also one that actually goes back to antiquity itself. Confucius, teaching at roughly the same time as the fall of the first temple in Jerusalem, considered himself a "transmitter" rather than an "innovator," adding that "I am truthful to what I say and devoted to antiquity."[7] In most Chinese intellectual traditions, philosophers have historically argued that the template for a good society is to be found through replicating the conduct of the ancient sage kings; in popular traditions, almost every staple of society—medicine, agriculture, language, etc.—is regularly attributed to quasi-historical culture heroes. All of this is not to suggest that the Jewish and Chinese cultures are exclusively regressive or backward-

[7]Confucius, p. 86.

looking—both traditions likewise value innovation and occasionally even iconoclasm—though each is continually challenged to construct creative transformations of the tradition that simultaneously meet the demands of modernity and maintain continuity with the heritage. Reconstructionist Judaism or the attempt to develop "communism with a Chinese face" both reflect this impulse. Sometimes, whole segments of the Jewish and Chinese population feel burdened by their legacies and attempt to break radically with them. For example, Jewish absorption into European and now North American cultures has been a very real (and for many, very uncomfortable) aspect of Jewish history, to the point that some highly assimilated Jews strive to sever their connection altogether.[8] During Mao Tse-tung's "Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution" in the 60s, one of the slogans of the infamous Red Guards was "destroy everything old," a motto that was frequently etched into the walls of desecrated Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian temples.

Closely related to the desire to perpetuate an inherited tradition is the value placed on education in both Jewish and Chinese communities, a point that is often among the first made in comparisons between the two traditions. Harold Kasimow writes, "With regard to love of learning, no two cultures have a greater affinity than Judaism and Chinese thought."[9] Indeed, both traditions do seem to emphasize that being conversant in the intellectual legacies—i.e., Talmudic scholarship and Confucian arts (like calligraphy and music) respectively—is in fact a joy. The opening line of the *Analects* (the book of sayings most plausibly attributed to Confucius) sums up this sentiment well: "Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals?"[10] As might be expected, there is in both cultures a special status given to those whose responsibility it is to transmit the traditional lore. Many rabbis identify their principal role as that of teacher, and the image of the usually elderly scholar or storyteller is a significant part of Jewish folklore and art. In China, Christian missionaries quickly realized that the true "religious" leaders with power and influence over the masses were not the Buddhist and Taoist priests but the upper-level Confucian literati. And even though the People's Republic still carries a residual distaste for intellectuals stemming from the Cultural Revolution, the birthday of Confucius is still celebrated in Taiwan as Teacher's Day. Still, the overly broad brush of "love of learning" may perpetuate a trace of internal propaganda that the two cultures are in no hurry to eliminate. True, education is an

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[8]This issue is now penetrating into popular American culture, as the 1996 Tony Award play, Alfred Uhry's *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, chronicles the early twentieth-century assimilation of German Jews (with names like "Sunny" and "Lala") into southern culture and their embarrassment at being identified with the new old-world Ellis Island immigrants.

[9]Kasimow, p. 141.

[10]Confucius, p. 61.

important part of Jewish and Chinese cultures, but the latter has been plagued by widespread illiteracy, so much so that China underwent a major language reform only a few decades ago in an attempt to make reading and writing more accessible to the masses. In both cultures, the emphasis on education is not entirely due to a pervasive zest for knowledge, but also reflects much more pragmatic concerns. The stereotypes of the Jewish lawyer and Chinese computer programmer are overly simplistic and patronizing, but there is more than a shred of truth to the idea that much of the incentive for education is the public reward that it reaps. Historically, Jews have relied on education as a way to level the playing field in societies that were ambivalent or outwardly hostile toward them. Becoming a professional signified autonomy, and careers that offer good economic reward still tend to be prized more than those that do not. In China, on the other hand, an education guaranteed social status and economic reward by allowing one not to become a self-employed professional, but to land a position in public service. During most of China's history, civil service examinations determined who would be the community officials, predicated on the assumption that mastery of the Confucian classics indicated high moral character. Education may be its own reward in traditional Jewish and Chinese communities, but it is also a source of power, both economic and political.

If there is one element that most justifiably leads Jews to believe that they really do have much in common with the Chinese, and vice versa, it is the highly elaborate system of moral responsibility and family-centered loyalties that both traditions share. Judaism is frequently described by scholars as an "ethical monotheism," and its 613 biblical commandments and volumes of talmudic and mishnaic interpretation certainly illustrate the belief that a covenant with God is chiefly concerned with how human beings should be interacting with one another. Similarly, the governing ethos of Chinese culture (which is formalized in Confucian thought, but also passed on in Taoist and Buddhist institutions) is one of proper ritualized expression of social obligation, based on unquestioned hierarchical relationships such as that of ruler to subject, husband to wife, and older brother to younger brother.[11] The highest ethical ideal is *jen* (pronounced "ren"), best translated as "humanheartedness" or perhaps "benevolence." The Chinese character for this term is formed by combining the ideograms for "person" and "two," which builds in the linguistic and visual message that it is a quality of human sensitivity pertinent to and made manifest in social relationships. But where both the Jewish and Chinese traditions emphasize the importance of maintaining the health of the community, it is only Judaism, by virtue of its place in Western civilization, that has

[11]The fact that sibling relationships are not viewed as equal is expressed in the Chinese language, which has different worlds for "older brother," "younger brother," "older sister," and "younger sister," but no single word for "brother," "sister," or "sibling."

in recent centuries developed a parallel ethic of individual rights. Social responsibility still assumes such centrality in Chinese culture that the people frequently internalize a practiced ability to subvert individual will for the good of the whole. This is not merely a case of the mother who almost involuntarily "prefers" the burnt piece of toast; it is a phenomenon where the masses are able to shift their ideologies instantly if those in power determine that it is for the collective good for them to do so. Western media initially reported that there had been considerable Chinese support for the students at the beginning of the Tianenmen Square demonstrations, though now they are largely (yet not unanimously) written off as "hooligans." Similarly, there is a recurring theme of social policy that to Western eyes seems coercive—collective responsibility, forced birth control, etc.—but that has always been justified as the appropriate weighing of priorities. The current one-child policy—enforced through a combination of economic sanctions and elaborate social pressures—and the traditional preference for male children has nevertheless produced an unexpected and chilling result, the abandonment or even infanticide of an alarming number of baby girls. Many of the children who survive are now being made available for international adoptions, and it is not uncommon that they are adopted by Jewish families.

Interestingly enough, the linchpin of both Jewish and Chinese ethics is unquestionably the family and the obligations that bind its internal relations. In Judaism, the importance of obedience to and respect for parents is illustrated by the patriarchal narratives and formally canonized in the fifth commandment, and it is still evident in many aspects of Jewish family life, culminating with the traditional mourning rituals. Conversely, the necessity of parental responsibility to offspring is also a prominent theme, beginning with the bringing of the new child into the covenant and continuing with the inculcation of the tradition. It is frequently noted that the home rather than the synagogue is the true locus of Jewish religiosity, something especially observable during holidays, sabbath, and important events like births, weddings, and funerals. In the Chinese tradition, the building block of humanheartedness is *hsaio*, usually translated as filial piety, for any sense of ethical obligation to others grows from an extension of innate respect for parents. Obedience to one's father and mother is such an uncritically accepted rule that many Chinese are appalled when they observe or learn about the ease with which Western offspring deviate from their parents' wishes. Like the Jews, the Chinese have elaborate mourning rituals, with special days set aside for visiting and tending to the graves of ancestors. Outsiders may question the extent of family loyalties when they press the issue of female abandonment, though even this is most often understood by the Chinese as a desperate act of filiality, as an attempt to give one's parents a male grandchild. "There are three ways of being a bad son," a canonized

Confucian scholar writes. "The most serious is to have no heir."[12] Jews and Chinese share this desire to extend the family line, and the population problem has made this a painful crisis in the lives of many Chinese.

All of the aforementioned themes—primacy of collective identity, mythology of unity, respect for history and tradition, emphasis on education, family-centered ethics—point toward perhaps the most crucial aspect of the Jewish and Chinese worldviews: an affirmative, existentialist orientation toward reality. It is this component, the idea that ultimate meaning is normally to be found in the here-and-now, that is often most difficult for those outside the traditions, particularly Christians, to understand. Neither tradition has a concept of original sin. The universe is viewed as a fundamentally sound and good creation, and thus there is no necessity for "salvation" and only peripheral discussion of the afterlife. The soteriological equivalent in both traditions is probably something closer to "transformation," the achievement of the person's full moral and cultural potential, the realization (both in the sense of "discovering" and "making real") of the inherent dignity of the human being and the community in which he or she belongs. Harold Kasimow writes, "Like Judaism, Chinese thought is life-affirming; both stress life after birth, not life after death. The dilemma for adherents of each faith is how to become really human, and the doctrine of becoming truly human is central to both Judaic and Chinese thought."[13] Tu Wei-ming, a creative modern proponent of Confucian ethics, adds, "The ultimate concern of self-realization actually necessitates a ceaseless process of inner moral and spiritual transformation."[14] Thus, matters that are blatantly worldly and blatantly *human*—from family gatherings on holidays to the establishment and continuation of the state of Israel, from asking a local deity for a male child to reuniting Hong Kong with the Peoples' Republic—are profoundly significant, and it would be phenomenologically irresponsible to understand them as anything less than *sacred* concerns. And of course, the deepest problems facing modern Jews and Chinese—making sense of the Holocaust, reaching stability in the Middle East, maintaining a distinct Chinese identity after the collapse of the dynastic system and the failures of Mao's communism—are nothing less than *religious* issues, even if they are not always articulated as such. This is not to deny the importance of God and metaphysical reflection for Jews, or of the mandate of heaven for Chinese, but whether because of or in spite of the manifold doctrinal concerns, the people find their greatest joys and most painful disappointments in the world, in their immediate day-to-day realities.

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[12]*Mencius*, tr. D. C. Lau (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 127.

[13]Kasimow, p. 141.

[14]Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 22.

An Unusual Instance of Dialogue

Historically, occasions for Jewish-Chinese interfaith dialogue have been uncommon but not unheard of, and the remainder of this essay will concern one fairly recent instance of it, a fascinating morsel of both the Jewish and Chinese religious histories. In the early part of the twentieth century, Martin Buber, the brilliant and controversial existentialist thinker, undertook a serious dialogue with Chinese philosophy more than a decade before penning *I and Thou*. At that time, Buber had just completed his early Hasidic studies—*The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* and *The Legends of the Baal-Shem*—and was intrigued by the "romantic" *verstehen* school of hermeneutics, having attended a series of lectures by Wilhelm Dilthey. The culmination of this encounter was *Talks and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (1910) and *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories* (1911), as well as a series of public lectures over the next decade on subjects ranging from Jewish-Chinese affinities to the cryptic Taoist text, the *Tao Te Ching*.[15] In the past, Buber's dialogue with Chinese philosophy was usually explained as part of a broader passing interest in mysticism or as a transitional stage in his own philosophical development, but this is only part of the story. I would argue that this cross-fertilization of ideas, especially Buber's engagement with *Chuang Tzu*, was a dialogue in the truest sense of the word, where both participants were ultimately enriched by the encounter.[16]

The text of *Chuang Tzu* is an eponymous treatise, the oldest portions of which probably date to the fourth century B.C.E. The author of the authentic chapters emerges as a philosopher, poet, and satirist, and his writings range from epistemological repartee to allegorical vignettes. What Buber did not realize was that *Chuang Tzu* had already been a controversial text in Chinese scholarly circles, having been labeled as everything from brilliant pastoral literature and a mystic's chronicle to antisocial bellyaching and the abject remnant of a moribund slave-owning class. It is still in use in a Taiwanese monastic community as a manual for meditation. Buber, who did not read Chinese and was unaware of the text's complex history, worked from two or three available English

[15]The original documents were *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse* (Leibzig: Insel-Verlag, 1910); *Chinesische Geisterp und Liebesgeschichten* (Frankfurt: Rüteb & Loening, 1911); "Der Geist des Orient und das Judentum," in *Der Neue Merkur* 2, No. 3 (June 1915), and "Besprechungen mit Martin Buber in Ascona, August 1924, über *Lao-tse's Tao-te-king*" (unpublished manuscript). The best account thus far of the Lao Tzu manuscript is Irene Eber, "Martin Buber and Taoism," *Monumenta Serica* 42 (1994), pp. 445–464.

[16]This argument is the thesis of my book, *I and Tao: Martin Buber's Encounter with Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

versions and the counsel of at least one Chinese colleague.[17] In the version he published, Buber reproduced fifty-four passages, translating them into German with much the same methodological promiscuity he had brought to the Hasidic texts. He edited and rearranged text liberally, sometimes translated from one English version, sometimes from another, sometimes combined English versions or spliced notes of commentary directly into the text, and occasionally interjected his own interpolations. He also wrote a romantic and impressionistic commentary, synthesizing his reflections on both *Chuang Tzu* and the *Tao Te Ching*. One might be inclined to wonder how Buber had the confidence (some area studies specialists might call it arrogance) to "translate" and interpret a Chinese text without sinological expertise. The answer is that Buber brought the same Dilthey-esque hermeneutic assumption that he had brought to his Hasidic studies, the idea that he could somehow reanimate and relive the experience of the author through an intuitive (perhaps mystical), empathic connection.[18] Thus, Buber saw himself not as a neutral transmitter of the stories, but as one who was telling them anew and making their meaning manifest through his own phenomenological imagination.

With this in mind, he developed an intriguing hermeneutic framework on the *Chuang Tzu*, where textual "meaning" was identified not with the reconstructed intent of the author, but with the self-transformation of the reader inspired by his or her engagement with the text. Thus, a faithful interpretation would not explicate simply what the text *says*, but would demonstrate what it *inspires*. Ironically, this position has since been unintentionally echoed by several sinologists,[19] which begins to suggest that Buber's encounter with *Chuang Tzu* is significant not only for its role in Buber's philosophical development, but for the area of Taoist studies as well. Furthermore, once Buber established this hermeneutic, he implicitly offered most of the commentary portion of his work both as a legitimate response to *Chuang Tzu* and as a statement of his own self-consciously transforming view of reality. That is to say, Buber's principal interpretive themes—oneness within transformation, continuous regeneration of self, the existential sphere as the locus of meaning—simultaneously reflected a defensible reading of the *Chuang Tzu* and were philosophically compatible with his other works

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[17]Wang Chingdao, a visiting lecturer at the Berlin Seminar for Oriental Languages from 1907 to 1911, definitely assisted Buber with both published translations. There were other Chinese language teachers there during that period as well.

[18]See Steven D. Kepnes, "A Hermeneutic Approach to the Buber-Scholem Controversy," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38, No. 1 (1987), pp. 81–98; and "Buber as Hermeneutic: Relations to Dilthey and Gadamer," *Harvard Theological Review* 81, No. 2 (1988), pp. 629–638.

[19]See, for example, Wu Kuang-ming, *Chuang Tzu: World Philosopher at Play* (New York: Scholars Press, 1982) and *The Butterfly as Companion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), as well as Robert Allinson, *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

of the period.[20] More and more, it becomes clear that Buber's work represents both a projection of his own changing religious propensities and a worthwhile voice in sinological discourse.

There is also considerable evidence that the implications of this dialogue extend well beyond the aforementioned points. What is perhaps most important is that in both Buber's text translation and commentary, one can detect the germination of his I-Thou principle, a recurring motif that I have elsewhere labeled "proto-dialogical" thought. That is to say, there is tremendous thematic continuity between Buber's recasting of *Chuang Tzu* and the mature dialogical position that he would later express in *I and Thou*. For example, in one heavily interpolated passage from the text translation, Buber presents Chuang Tzu's developmental account of an individual ascending the steps toward an enlightened state, reporting that "his mind became radiant like daybreak and he beheld being (*Wesen*), his I, countenance to countenance (*von Angesicht zu Angesicht*)." When taken in tandem with the establish hermeneutic, this connection might suggest that the process of transformation begun through Buber's original encounter with *Chuang Tzu* was continued in his self-conscious formulation of dialogical philosophy in *I and Thou*. In fact, Buber's famous passage where he strips away subject-object experience and draws into relation with a tree—"I encounter no soul or dryad of the tree, but the tree itself"[21]—is surely a reflection on Chuang Tzu's own meditations on the "use of the useless tree."[22] In a manner of speaking, *I and Thou* can be imaginatively conceived, at least in part, as a subsequent layer of Buber's interpretation of *Chuang Tzu*. Or, in more familiar Buberian language, if the Taoist volume is the chrysalis, then *I and Thou* is the emerging butterfly.

What makes the previous claim more than a clever bit of post-modernist sophistry is that Buber's dialogical principle does, in fact, bring much to an understanding of *Chuang Tzu*, that the terminology and spirit of *I and Thou* provide a valid and creative lens through which one may reexamine the original Chinese, thus bringing the dialogue and the hermeneutics full circle. Specifically, the new interpretive framework provides an important conceptual link between Chuang Tzu's complex philosophical repartee on theoretical relation—e.g., his discourse on equalizing things[23]—and his playful mystical vignettes illustrating personal relationships with humans, nature, and spiritual beings,

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[20]In particular, this ties in with *Daniel—Gespräche von der Verwirklichung*, which was published in 1913.

[21]Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Ronald Gregor Smith, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 8.

[22]See *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, Burton Watson, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 36, 63–65.

[23]See *Chuang Tzu*, pp. 36–49.

Buber's three "spheres in which the world of relation arises."[24] There are numerous examples throughout the text of *Chuang Tzu* of what Buber refers to in *I and Thou* as "strange lyric and dramatic episodes, seductive and magical,"[25] where various exemplars (often seen as simpletons or grotesques) execute the most mundane tasks effortlessly, almost magically. There is the engraver whose bellstand virtually carves itself, the elderly fisherman who blends seamlessly into the landscape, the archer who never misses the smallest target, and the carpenter who requires no straightedge or compass because his fingers "changed along with things."[26] The most memorable account is of Cook Ting, the ox-carver who has used the same blade for nineteen years, because he can so effortlessly discern the configurations of matter and energy that he slides the edge of his knife through the spaces between the joints.[27] In Buberian language, these instances all give allegorical clues as to how one can live in the "present," the true ultimate concern for Jews and Chinese, given their existential orientations toward reality.

Buber's dialogue with *Chuang Tzu* is one example of how the affinities between Jewish and Chinese religiosity give way to an interesting and, I would argue, mutually beneficial dialogue. Buber's dialogical principle owes much to his encounter with the Chinese text, and the sinological discourse on the text is well served to take Buber's interpretations seriously. Moreover, the resonances between Chuang Tzu's model of mystical fulfillment—what sinologist Lee Yearley calls an "intraworldly mysticism"[28]—and Buber's model—what Buber scholar Maurice Friedman calls a "mysticism of the concrete and the particular"[29]—are so strong as to suggest a single typology of mystical experience. Indeed, this is an exemplary case where comparative perspective enhances the understandings of the particulars and raises provocative questions about the general category.

From Comparative Religion to Dialogue, and Back

The area of Jewish-Chinese studies is indeed a fertile one, for both the intellectual ground that can be covered in comparative study and the mutual enrichment that can

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[24]See Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 6

[25]See Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 34.

[26]See *Chuang Tzu*, pp. 205–206, 206–207, 228–230, 259–260.

[27]See *Chuang Tzu*, pp. 50–51.

[28]See Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 125–139.

[29]See Maurice Friedman, "Martin Buber and Asia," *Philosophy East and West* 26 (1976), pp. 415–416.

follow from interfaith dialogue. These two streams are always intertwined, for the scholar is always in dialogue and the participant in dialogue is always implicitly engaged in research, whether it is intentional or not. For either enterprise, the principles set down in this "prolegomenon" may be helpful for focusing the inquiry and providing some specific contexts to examine. This essay is hardly the final word on the subject, for it merely establishes some territory in which the more detailed work can begin. Perhaps the biggest challenge will be to examine how two traditions with several elemental connections have nevertheless evolved (and are continuing to evolve) in very different ways. The more daunting task for both comparative study and interfaith dialogue is to make sense of real differences, and many of these can be quite complicated. The Chinese veneration of ancestors and the unapologetic quasi-contractual relations with numerous regional deities seem to stand in stark contrast with Jewish monotheism. On the other hand, the basic dualism in Judaism between God and humankind is typologically very different from the monism that binds the Chinese triad of heaven, earth, and humankind. There is also the practical difference between the Chinese tendency to syncretize and the Jewish need to maintain distinct lines between itself and other traditions. The time is indeed ripe for all types of work in Jewish-Chinese studies, and it is hoped that they can be approached with a measure of intellectual honesty and methodological care.

What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis?: Embodied Communities and Paradigms of Religious Tradition

Barbara A. Holdrege

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What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis? Embodied Communities and Paradigms of Religious Tradition

Barbara A. Holdrege
University of California, Santa Barbara

Up until recently the academic study of religion has been dominated by Protestant Christian paradigms of religious tradition, in which precedence is given to such categories as belief, doctrine, and theology, and tradition-identity is rooted in the missionary character of Christian traditions. The essay argues that rabbinic Judaism and brahmanical Hinduism provide alternative paradigms of religious tradition as "embodied communities" in which priority is given to issues of practice, observance, and law, and tradition-identity is embodied in ethnic and cultural categories that reflect the predominantly nonmissionary character of these traditions. The manner in which the rabbinic and brahmanical traditions construct their respective categories of scripture—Torah and Veda—reflects the more fundamental affinities shared by these traditions as representatives of a distinctive paradigm of religious tradition: as elite textual communities that have codified their respective norms in the form of scriptural canons; as ethnocultural systems concerned with issues of family, ethnic and cultural integrity, blood lineages, and the intergenerational transmission of traditions; and as religions of orthopraxy characterized by elaborate legal systems, sacrificial traditions, purity codes, and dietary laws.

Up until recently the academic study of religion has been dominated by paradigms of religious tradition that arose out of a specific and discernible Protestant Christian context. The Protestant legacy of the academic study of religion in Europe and America, and its links to Enlightenment discourse and colonialist projects in the history of the modern West, is evident in the way in which the prevailing paradigms tend to privilege certain categories while marginalizing others. These paradigms emphasize a series of hierarchical dichotomies between such categories as sacred and profane, belief and practice, doctrine and law, individual and community, universalism and particularism, and tradition and modernity. This hierarchizing of categories can be seen, for example, in a number of persistent trends in religious studies scholarship: first, the tendency to emphasize the distinction between sacred and profane and, as a corollary of the separation of church and state, to compartmentalize religion as something distinct from culture; second, the tendency to define religion as a "belief system" and to give priority to categories such as faith, belief, doctrine, and theology while underprivileging the role of practice, ritual, and law; third, the tendency to give precedence to the individual over

the community as the locus of religious life and consequently to give less emphasis to the social and cultural dimensions of religion; and, fourth, the tendency to define religious identity in terms that privilege universalism over particularism and hence reflect a missionary model of religious tradition. While recent developments in the fields of ritual studies and cultural studies have provided important correctives to such tendencies, the Protestant legacy still lingers—albeit unconsciously—in the work of many scholars of religion.[1]

The Protestant subtext of the dominant paradigms provides the implicit standard against which other religious traditions are compared and evaluated. While perhaps appropriate for the study of some religious traditions, such paradigms, together with the hierarchical taxonomies they perpetuate, become a straitjacket when applied to other traditions. Indeed, two of the world's major religious traditions—"Hinduisms" and "Judaisms"—defy the classificatory schemas associated with the prevailing paradigms. These traditions construct other categories and taxonomies that bring to light different sets of relationships, such as those between religion and culture, ethnic identity and religious adherence, observance and nonobservance, and purity and impurity. Such relationships are obscured by the application of the prevailing models. In contrast to the Protestant-based paradigms, in which precedence is given to belief, doctrine, and theology, and tradition-identity is rooted in the missionary character of Christian traditions, Hinduisms and Judaisms provide alternative paradigms of religious tradition, in which priority is given to issues of practice, observance, and law, and tradition-identity is defined primarily in terms of ethnic and cultural categories that reflect the predominantly nonmissionary character of these traditions.

Among the array of Hinduisms and Judaisms, I would suggest that brahmanical Hinduism and rabbinic Judaism in particular share significant affinities. Indeed, I would argue that—contrary to the stereotypical characterization of Hindu and Jewish traditions as representing opposite ends of the spectrum of the world's religions—the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions constitute two species of the same genus of religious tradition: as elite textual communities that have codified their respective norms in the form of scriptural canons; as ethnocultural systems concerned with issues of family, ethnic and

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[1]A number of scholars have raised issues in recent years concerning the persistence of Protestant presuppositions and categories in the academic study of religion. See, for example, Jacob Neusner, *Ancient Judaism and Modern Category-Formation: "Judaism," "Midrash," "Messianism," and Canon in the Past Quarter-Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), pp. 13–17; Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions* 31, No. 1 (Aug. 1991): 1–23. See also Frits Staal's more general critique of Western paradigms of religious tradition, which he argues are inappropriate for the study of Asian traditions, in his *Rules without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 387–419.

cultural integrity, blood lineages, and the intergenerational transmission of traditions; and as religions of orthopraxy characterized by hereditary priesthoods and sacrificial traditions, comprehensive legal systems, elaborate regulations concerning purity and impurity, and dietary laws. I would suggest, moreover, that the comparative study of these traditions is important precisely because it provides the basis for developing alternative paradigms of religious tradition to the Protestant-based models that have tended to dominate the academic study of religion.[2]

Textual Communities and Models of Scripture

The categories of tradition-identity shared by the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions are reflected in the manner in which these ethnic-based traditions construct categories of scripture. Each of these textual communities defines itself in relation to a particular sacred language—Sanskrit, Hebrew—and to a particular corpus of sacred texts—Veda, Torah—that is held to be linguistically, ethnically, and culturally tied to a particular people—Indo-Aryans, Jews. The mechanisms through which the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions have circumscribed and subsequently extended their scriptural canons—as represented by the categories of Veda and Torah, respectively—serve as a means of circumscribing the ethnocultural identity of each community in relation to other peoples, of delineating and legitimating the hierarchical differentiation of functions within each community, of accommodating competing currents within the tradition, and of authorizing certain ritual and sociocultural practices.

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[2]The significance of the systematic comparison of Hinduisms and Judaisms as the basis for constructing alternative paradigms of religious tradition has been emphasized by my colleague Paul Morris. Morris has stressed in particular the heuristic value of positing two discrete models—missionary traditions (Christianities, Islams, Buddhisms) and nonmissionary traditions (Hinduisms, Judaisms)—in order to elucidate the notion of religious tradition. See Paul Morris, "The Discourse of Traditions: 'Judaisms' and 'Hinduisms'" (paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, 1992).

The recent upsurge of interest in the comparative study of Hindu and Jewish traditions among scholars of religion is evidenced by the establishment of a number of forums to foster sustained discussions of the historical connections and cross-cultural resonances among these traditions: the American Academy of Religion Consultation in Comparative Studies in "Hinduisms" and "Judaisms" (1995); the Society for Indo-Judaic Studies (1993); the journal *Indo-Judaic Studies* (1994); and the World Heritage Hindu-Judaic Studies Series (1995). Mention should also be made of the recent collection of essays *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, ed. Hananya Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), which represents one of the first efforts by a group of scholars of Judaica and Indology to explore the affinities among these traditions. Goodman's introduction provides a brief survey of previous studies that have attempted to delineate connections among Hindu and Jewish traditions.

In discussing the category of canon in the history of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith has suggested that "canon is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity."[3] He further suggests that the task of overcoming the limitation posed by a closed canon is "continually to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that is known or everything that exists *without* altering the canon in the process."[4] Both Veda and Torah would appear to conform to at least one aspect of Smith's model in that each functions within its respective tradition as an encompassing, paradigmatic symbol that is simultaneously delimited and potentially unlimited.[5] At the center of each canon is a fixed corpus of texts, whether oral or written, that has been meticulously preserved in strictly unaltered form: the Vedic *mantra*s collected in the Saṃhitās and the Sefer Torah (Pentateuch). At the same time the domains of both Veda and Torah have been extended through a variety of strategies so that each functions within its respective tradition as an open-ended, permeable category within which can be subsumed potentially all texts, teachings, and practices authorized by the religious elite.

In my study of brahmanical conceptions of Veda and rabbinic and kabbalistic conceptions of Torah, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*,[6] I suggest that one of the strategies by which the categories of Veda and Torah have been extended beyond their textual boundaries is through identification with the Word, which is itself at times represented as an encompassing category. This Word cannot be delimited to the written word, as the term "scripture" itself and its common equivalents —for example, "sacred writings" or "holy writ"—might suggest. Nor is it sufficient

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[3]Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," chapter 3 of his *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 52.

[4]Smith, "Sacred Persistence," p. 48.

[5]It is not within the scope of the present analysis to enter into the scholarly debate concerning the meaning of the term "symbol." In this essay I use the term in accordance with Paul Ricoeur's characterization of a symbol as having a double intentionality. The first order meaning is the primary, literal signification, which points beyond itself to a second order meaning that functions as a potentially inexhaustible "surplus of signification." Veda and Torah, as we shall see, each function as a symbol in this sense, in that each has a primary signification as a delimited corpus of texts, which opens out to a second order meaning that explodes these circumscribed limits and assimilates to itself a network of significations. For Ricoeur's analysis of the nature and function of symbols, see his *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 10–18, and his subsequent reflections in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 53–63.

[6]See Barbara A. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). A review of my book appears in this issue of *Shofar*. For an overview of the results of my study, see "Veda and Torah: The Word Embodied in Scripture," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, pp. 103–179.

simply to expand the meaning of scripture to encompass its oral-aural dimensions as spoken word. The Word embodied in Veda and Torah is also represented as having a cosmological dimension, in which on one level it is depicted as a cosmic reality that is a living aspect of the divine, while on another level it is portrayed as the subtle plan of creation containing the elements of the divine language through which the creator brings forth the manifold forms of the universe.

The concept of the Word, as expressed in the theories of language developed by the brahmanical tradition and the rabbinic and kabbalistic traditions, encompasses not only the gross level of vocalized speech, but also the subtler levels of nonvocalized speech as expressed in the entire range of development of thought. The Word is conceived as encompassing both unspoken thought and spoken utterance and thus has two aspects: a cognitive dimension, which is the unspoken thought or idea in the mind that constitutes the conceptual content of the word; and a phonic dimension, which encompasses both the internally perceived sound of mental discourse and the vocalized speech through which thought finds expression in externally audible sound. When translated onto the cosmic level, as described in certain strands of the traditions, the distinction between unspoken thought and vocalized speech is understood as a distinction between the principles of knowledge and speech. The unspoken thought in the cosmic mind is knowledge or wisdom, which is the cognitive *content* of the Word. The Word is disclosed by means of speech, which is the vehicle for the manifest *expression* of the Word.

Veda and Torah, as discussed at length in my book, are each represented in certain strands of their respective traditions as a multileveled cosmic reality that is correlated with different levels of the Word, in which the principles of knowledge and speech both come into play. Four types of formulations can be distinguished, in which Veda and Torah, respectively, are variously represented as (1) the totality of the Word, which is the essence of the ultimate reality; (2) knowledge or wisdom,[7] which is identified with the creator principle as the immediate source of creation; (3) divine language, which constitutes the archetypal plan or "blueprint"[8] from which the creator structures the forms of creation; and (4) a concrete corpus of oral and/or written texts.

My concern in the present essay is, first, to provide a brief schematic overview of this fourfold model of scripture, which is based on my extended study of Veda and

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[7]While this aspect of Veda is generally designated as "knowledge," as the etymology of the term itself suggests, the corresponding aspect of Torah is generally designated as Ḥokmāh, "wisdom."

[8]Even though the term "blueprint" is obviously a modern designation for which no literal equivalent can be found in Sanskrit or Hebrew, I have nevertheless chosen to use the term at times when discussing images of the Veda or Torah as the plan of creation in order to connote the plan's association with the architect of creation.

Torah, and then to focus the remainder of my analysis on the ways in which this scriptural model reflects the more fundamental affinities shared by the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions as representatives of a distinctive paradigm of religious tradition. With respect to the model of scripture outlined below, it is obviously not possible within the scope of the present essay to provide a differentiated, contextualized treatment of the various textual representations of Veda and Torah. For a sustained analysis and extensive documentation of relevant sources, the reader may refer to my book, in which I trace the history of interpretations of such representations through the core texts of each tradition's formative development. The brahmanical phase of the book's analysis is concerned primarily with mythological speculations found in Vedic literature—Saṃhitās (ca. 1500–800 B.C.E.), Brāhmaṇas (ca. 900–650 B.C.E.), Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads (ca. 800–200 B.C.E.)—and in certain post-Vedic texts—Manu-Smṛti (ca. 200 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), Mahābhārata (ca. 400 B.C.E.–400 C.E.), and selected Purāṇas (ca. 300–1000 C.E.)—with some attention to the philosophical formulations of the Darśanas, in particular Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta.[9] The Judaic portion of the book's analysis begins with a consideration of pre-rabbinic conceptions of primordial wisdom/Torah[10] and then focuses primarily on certain aggadic speculations found in the various strata of rabbinic texts—Mishnah (ca. 220 C.E.), Tannaitic Midrashim (up to 400 C.E.),[11] classical Amoraic Midrashim (ca. 400–640 C.E.),[12] Babylonian Talmud (ca. 500–600 C.E.), and selected post-Talmudic Midrashim (ca.

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[9]J. Muir has collected together relevant passages from Vedic and post-Vedic texts regarding the origin and cosmological status of the Veda, although apart from brief introductory statements he does not attempt to analyze and interpret the significance of, and interrelationship among, these texts. See J. Muir, comp. and trans., *Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, Their Religion and Institutions*, Vol. 3, *The Vedas: Opinions of Their Authors and of Later Indian Writers on Their Origin, Inspiration, and Authority*, 2nd rev. ed. (1874; reprint Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1967).

[10]My analysis of pre-rabbinic literature focuses on the wisdom hymn in Proverbs 8:22–31, the wisdom books of the Apocrypha (Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch 3:9–4:4, and Wisdom of Solomon), and the Alexandrian Jewish philosophers Aristobulus and Philo.

[11]My analyses focus on those Tannaitic Midrashim for which we have complete manuscripts: Mᵉkîltā' dᵉ-R. Ishmael, Siprā', Siprê on Numbers, and Siprê on Deuteronomy.

[12]Classical Amoraic Midrashim include Genesis Rabbāh, Leviticus Rabbāh, Pᵉsîqtā' dᵉ-R. Kahana, Lamentations Rabbāh, Esther Rabbāh I, Song of Songs Rabbāh, and Ruth Rabbāh.

640–1200 C.E.)[13]—with some consideration also of medieval kabbalistic speculations in the Zohar and the theosophical Kabbalah of thirteenth-century Spain.[14]

In the following overview of the model of scripture that emerges from my extended study, I will highlight the structural affinities between certain representations of Veda and Torah. There are of course significant differences in the conceptions and practices of these scriptural traditions, as I have discussed at length in my book. However, for the purpose of the present analysis I will focus on their structural similarities.

(1) Scripture as the Word: The Essence of the Ultimate Reality

Veda and Torah are represented in certain strands of their respective traditions as the Word in its totality, which is the essence of the ultimate reality. The Veda is at times described in Vedic and post-Vedic mythology as the Word, *brahman*, which is the essence of Brahman, the ultimate reality, and is particularly associated with the *saguṇa*

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[13]My analyses of post-Talmudic Midrashim focus on Pᵉsîqtā' Rabbāṯî (ca. 7th c. C.E.), Tanḥûmā' Yᵉlammᵉḏēnû Midrashim (ca. 9th c. C.E.), and Pirqê dᵉ-R. Eliezer (ca. 8th c. C.E.).

[14]In rabbinic texts speculations concerning the preexistent and cosmogonic status of the Torah are not systematically developed as part of any consistent cosmology, and therefore it is difficult to assess whether such notions reflect a genuine interest in cosmological speculation or whether they are simply literary metaphors adopted in homiletical praise of the Torah. In contrast to the rather fragmentary nature of the rabbinic material, in which aggadic speculations about the Torah are interspersed throughout the texts, in medieval kabbalistic texts such speculations are generally presented as part of a grand cosmological scheme. The conceptions found in seminal form in rabbinic texts are fully elaborated and cosmologized by certain kabbalists, going beyond metaphorical personification to clear hypostatization. Although there is clearly a difference in perspective and emphases with respect to the representations of Torah found in rabbinic and kabbalistic texts, there are also sufficient threads of continuity to warrant juxtaposing these two different approaches.

Kabbalistic conceptions of Torah and language have been discussed from a variety of perspectives by Gershom Scholem, Moshe Idel, and Elliot Wolfson. See in particular Scholem's groundbreaking essay "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism," chapter 2 of his *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 32–86, and his article "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala," *Diogenes*, No. 79 (Fall 1972): 59–80 (Part 1); No. 80 (Winter 1972): 164–194 (Part 2). Among Idel's numerous studies, see his "Tᵉp̄îsaṯ ha-Tôrāh bᵉ-Siṗrûṯ ha-Hêḵālôṯ wᵉ-Gilgûlêhā ba-Qabbālāh," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981): 23–84; *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Menahem Kallus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Among Wolfson's studies, see his "Female Imaging of the Torah: From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol," in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding. Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Nahum M. Sarna, vol. 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 271–307; "The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the *Zohar*," *Religion* 18 (Oct. 1988): 311–345; "Letter Symbolism and *Merkavah* Imagery in the *Zohar*," in *'Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Ḥallamish (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), pp. 195–236.

("with attributes") dimension of Brahman that expresses itself in creation. In this context the Veda is identified in certain post-Vedic texts with Śabdabrahman, Brahman embodied in the Word. The Torah is similarly identified with the Word (*dāḇār*) of God or Name (*šēm*) of God, an identification that is generally assumed but not expanded upon in rabbinic texts. The Torah as the Word of God or Name of God is described in certain kabbalistic texts as the total manifestation of God's essence that is revealed in and through creation and is at times directly identified with God himself.[15]

(2) Scripture as Knowledge: The Creator Principle

Veda and Torah are each not only identified with the essence of the ultimate reality, but are also associated more specifically with that aspect of the divine which is responsible for bringing forth the phenomenal world. Each is represented in this context as the totality of knowledge or wisdom that serves as the immediate source of creation. The Veda is at times identified with the creator Prajāpati or Brahmā, the demiurge principle, who is extolled as the embodiment of knowledge and Veda incarnate. The Torah is personified in certain rabbinic texts as Ḥoḵmāh, primordial wisdom, which has existed from "the beginning" as God's architect or co-worker in creation. In certain kabbalistic texts the Torah as Ḥoḵmāh is hypostatized as the demiurge principle in the sᶜpîrôṯic pleroma, the realm of divine emanations.[16]

(3) Scripture as Divine Language: The Blueprint of Creation

Veda and Torah are each at times depicted in their respective traditions as the subtle plan or blueprint of creation, its constituent sounds, or letters constituting the primordial elements of the divine language from which the realm of forms is structured. The Vedic *mantra*s are represented in certain Vedic and post-Vedic accounts as the primordial utterances through which the creator brings forth the universe. In post-Vedic texts this notion is articulated in the image of the Vedas as the archetypal plan that the creator recites in order to manifest the names, forms, and functions of all beings. In the parallel conception found in certain rabbinic and kabbalistic texts, the divine architect consults his blueprint, the Torah, "looking into," contemplating, and/or uttering its words in order to bring forth the phenomenal world.[17]

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[15]For an analysis of relevant references from brahmanical texts and from rabbinic and kabbalistic texts, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 1 and 2, respectively.

[16]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 1 and 2.

[17]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 1 and 2.

(4) Scripture as Concrete Text

The primordial Word that serves as the source and blueprint of creation is represented as becoming embodied on earth in a concrete, bounded corpus of texts—the oral text of the Vedic *mantra*s or the written text of the Sefer Torah. The ancient Vedic *ṛṣi*s ("seers") are represented in brahmanical texts as the crucial link in the process of instantiation, for it is they who are said to have originally "seen" and "heard" the impulses of divine speech reverberating forth from the Transcendent. They subsequently uttered forth on the gross level of speech that which they cognized on the subtle level, and in this way, *śruti*, "that which was heard" by the *ṛṣi*s, was "recorded" through the vehicle of their speech and assumed a concrete form on earth as the recited texts of the Vedic *mantra*s. The process through which the primordial Torah became embodied on earth in the form of a written text, the Sefer Torah, is represented in rabbinic and kabbalistic texts as occurring at the revelation at Mount Sinai, in which Moses, the supreme prophet, acting as a scribe, recorded the words of God verbatim as they were revealed to him.[18]

If Veda and Torah were limited to their textual significations as bounded texts—the Vedic *mantras* and the Sefer Torah—their domain would remain closed, for the texts of these scriptures are fixed, and not a sound or syllable, jot or tittle may be altered. However, because Veda and Torah are identified with the limitless Word, their domain becomes open-ended and permeable, capable of absorbing a variety of texts and teachings beyond the circumscribed compass of the core texts.

The domain of the Veda as the Word (*brahman*/Śabdabrahman) is infinite, and while brahmanical authorities might maintain that the Word finds its quintessential expression in the primordial sounds of the Vedic *mantra*s, they claim that it is not limited to that expression. Potentially any text or teaching can claim to be included within the purview of Veda by assimilating itself to the Vedic *mantra*s through a variety of strategies, including (1) claiming to form part of *śruti*, the original cognitions of the *ṛṣi*s, in the case of the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads; (2) claiming the status of the "fifth Veda," in the case of the Itihāsas (epics) and Purāṇas; (3) establishing a genealogy that directly links the text's teachings to the Veda or to some form of divine revelation, in the case of the Manu-Smṛti; (4) claiming that the text's teachings derive from lost Vedic texts, a claim that could apply to potentially all *smṛti* texts;[19] or (5)

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[18]For a discussion of the phenomenology of Vedic cognition and of the Sinai revelation, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

[19]Sheldon Pollock has argued that, according to the etymology derived from the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā school, *smṛti* ("that which was remembered") is an open-ended category that encompasses any teachings or practices pertaining to *dharma* that have been "remembered" from lost Vedic texts. Understood in this way, Veda becomes a limitlessly expanding symbol that includes not only *śruti*

otherwise conforming to the model of the Veda. As Brian K. Smith has emphasized, such strategies, including a variety of other modes of assimilation, have been used not only by exponents of the brahmanical hierarchy but also by nonbrahmanical Hindu groups in order to invest their sacred texts with the transcendent authority of the Veda, which "functions as a touchstone for Hindu orthodoxy."[20] Whether the Veda is revered or rejected, appropriated or subverted, it remains a symbol invested with authoritative power that must be contended with by all those who wish to position themselves in relation to the brahmanical hierarchy.[21]

The domain of the Torah as the Word of God is also potentially limitless, and while rabbinic sages might hold that the Word finds its consummate expression in the Sefer Torah, they claim that it is not limited to that expression. The key to expanding the domain of Torah lies in expanding the scope of the revelation itself through claiming that the Word of God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai included not only a written text but also the oral tradition of interpreting the written text. The authority of subsequent texts and teachings is thus legitimated by establishing a connection between those texts or teachings and the Sefer Torah, either through (1) granting them a subsidiary status as part of the Written Torah, in the case of the books of the Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings); (2) allotting them a designated place as part of the Oral Torah, in

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but also *smṛti* texts. See Pollock's "'Tradition' as 'Revelation': *Śruti, Smṛti*, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power," in *Lex et Litterae: Essays on Ancient Indian Law and Literature in Honour of Oscar Botto*, eds. Siegfried Lienhard and Irma Piovano (Turin: CESMEO, forthcoming); "From Discourse of Ritual to Discourse of Power in Sanskrit Culture," in *Ritual and Power*, ed. Barbara A. Holdrege, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, No. 2 (Summer 1990): 322–328. See also Thomas Coburn's illuminating discussion of the relationship between *śruti* and *smṛti* in Hindu conceptions of scripture in "'Scripture' in India: Towards a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52, No. 3 (Sept. 1984): 435–459; reprinted in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 102–128.

[20]See Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 3–29, esp. 20–29.

[21]As J. C. Heesterman emphasizes, "The crux of the matter is that the Vedas hold the key to ultimate legitimation. Therefore, even if the Vedas are in no way related to the ways of human life and society, one is still forced to come to terms with them." J. C. Heesterman, "Veda and Dharma," in *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, eds. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty and J. Duncan M. Derrett (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), pp. 92–93. Heesterman's remark points to an observation often made by Indologists: the authoritative power of the Veda does not lie in the content of the Vedic Saṃhitās themselves, for their content is primarily concerned with sacrificial rituals and is not directly relevant to the teachings and practices of post-Vedic Hinduism.

the case of the teachings of the Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash;[22] (3) linking them to the revelation at Mount Sinai as part of the open-ended category of Oral Torah; or (4) otherwise aligning them with the model of the Sefer Torah. Through these and other strategies the Torah is transformed from a limited, bounded text—the Sefer Torah—into a limitless, encompassing symbol, "the single critical symbol of the Judaism of the dual Torah," as Jacob Neusner terms it, that represents the entire system of rabbinic Judaism.[23]

"Embodied Communities" and Paradigms of Religious Tradition

Might we expect to find comparable conceptions of scripture as a multileveled cosmic reality in other religious traditions—as part of what Wilfred Cantwell Smith has termed the "almost common human propensity to scripturalize"[24]—or are such representations unique to these scriptural traditions? I would suggest that although other traditions may have developed cosmological conceptions of scripture, the specific parallels highlighted in my study between brahmanical conceptions of Veda and rabbinic and kabbalistic conceptions of Torah are not necessarily representative of a more "universal" trend to cosmologize notions of language and text, but are rather reflective of the more fundamental structural affinities shared by these particular traditions.

The brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, as suggested earlier, provide alternative paradigms of religious tradition to the Protestant-based models that have tended to dominate the discourse of religious studies. These traditions constitute what we might term "embodied communities" in that their notions of tradition-identity, in contrast to the universalizing tendencies of missionizing traditions, are embodied in the particularities of ethnic and cultural categories defined in relation to a particular people (Indo-Aryans, Jews), a particular sacred language (Sanskrit, Hebrew), and a particular land (Āryāvarta, Israel). These ethnocultural systems share an abiding concern for the body

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[22]For a discussion of rabbinic conceptions of Written Torah and Oral Torah, see Ephraim E. Urbach, "The Written Law and the Oral Law," chapter 12 of his *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Vol. 1, trans. Israel Abrahams, 2nd rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1979), pp. 286–314. See also Martin S. Jaffee's illuminating analysis of the possible origins of the concept of Oral Torah, "How Much 'Orality' in Oral Torah? New Perspectives on the Composition and Transmission of Early Rabbinic Tradition," *Shofar* 10, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 53–72.

[23]See Jacob Neusner, *The Ecology of Religion: From Writing to Religion in the Study of Judaism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 240. For a brief discussion of the complex of meanings ascribed to the term Torah in various rabbinic texts, see esp. pp. 240–249, 109–112, 120–123. For a more extended discussion, see Neusner's *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[24]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Scripture as Form and Concept: Their Emergence for the Western World," in *Rethinking Scripture*, ed. Levering, p. 45.

as a site of central significance and the vehicle for the maintenance of the social, cosmic, and divine orders. The body is the locus of biological reproduction, socio-cultural reproduction, and theurgic power. It is the vehicle to be activated in ritual and social duties, maintained in purity, sustained through proper diet, and reproduced through appropriate sexual relations.[25]

The manner in which these traditions construct categories of language and canon is rooted in the embodied nature of these traditions. Indeed, one of the metaphors that is used to represent both Veda and Torah is that of the body. Veda as the Word is described in certain brahmanical texts as undergoing a series of successive embodiments, from subtle to gross, as the body of Brahman, the body of the creator principle, and the body of the cosmos, which in turn is reflected in the human body. The "corpus" of Vedic *mantras*, as the earthly manifestation of the cosmic blueprint, reflects and interconnects these various levels of embodiment.[26] While the rabbinic tradition tends to emphasize the incorporeal nature of God, the Torah is nevertheless represented at times as an organic unity that is a living aspect of the divine and that serves as the blueprint that becomes instantiated in the structures of the cosmos and the human body. The body metaphor is extended in kabbalistic texts such as the Zohar, which correlates the "body" of Torah with the body of the divine anthropos, the cosmos-body, and the human body.[27]

The Word embodied in texts—the Vedic *mantras* or the Sefer Torah—is further instantiated in the social "body" of the communities that preserve and transmit them. This process of embodiment occurs on a number of different levels: ethnic and linguistic identity, social structure, and practice.

(1) Embodiment in Ethnic and Linguistic Identity

Veda and Torah, respectively, become "incarnate" in a particular social body—the Indo-Aryan community or the people of Israel—as the constitutive category that defines its ethnic and linguistic identity over against other peoples—the non-Aryans or the gentiles. The "Indo-Aryans" and the "people of Israel" are not of course strictly delineated, closed ethnic groups, as the brahmanical tradition has absorbed various non-Aryan groups within its fold in the course of its history, just as the Jewish community has admitted gentiles through conversion and has even undertaken proselytizing efforts

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[25]Among recent works on the discourse of the body in Jewish traditions, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[26]For an analysis of relevant references, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 1.

[27]For an analysis of relevant references, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 2.

in certain periods.[28] Rather, these collective designations represent *idealized categories* in which tradition-identity is assigned first and foremost through birth into a community that defines itself in terms of blood descent.

Representations of Veda and Torah as the primordial Word that is the source and blueprint of creation would appear to present a claim to universal knowledge, and yet both traditions use a variety of strategies to circumscribe the Word and bind it linguistically, ethnically, and culturally to a specific people. The *ṛṣi*s to whom cognition of the Vedic *mantra*s is ascribed are at times represented as semidivine beings who assist the creator in the cosmogonic process and who are the progenitors of the entire human race. This might imply that all of humanity inherited the Veda from their ancestors, the universal progenitors. At the same time, however, brahmanical texts are careful to localize the procreative powers of the *ṛṣi*s as "our fathers," the forefathers of the Indo-Aryan people, and more specifically of the brahmanical lineages that have preserved the *ṛṣi*s' cognitions.[29] The Indo-Aryans, the inhabitants of Āryāvarta, are thus designated as the heirs of the cosmic blueprint, the Veda, and of the perfected (*saṃskṛta*) language, Sanskrit, the language of the gods and the language of nature in which the Vedic *mantra*s are recorded.

The Torah is also at times represented as the potential inheritance of all nations, which the people of Israel alone proved worthy to receive. Certain rabbinic traditions maintain that God considered giving the Torah to Adam and thus by implication to the descendants of Adam, the entire human race. However, as a consequence of Adam's sin the nations of the world, as the children of Adam and the children of Noah, were vouchsafed only seven commandments. On the other hand, the patriarch Abraham, the forefather of Israel, is held to have been so meritorious that he observed all of the commandments of the Torah even before they were given at Mount Sinai. The descendants of Abraham—Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob—followed his example, and thus even before the Sinai revelation the Torah was destined to be the inheritance of the people of Israel.[30] At the revelation at Mount Sinai God once again extended the

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[28]Even though the brahmanical Hindu and Jewish traditions are not generally characterized as missionizing religions, there is nevertheless some evidence of proselytizing tendencies in these traditions. See, for example, Arvind Sharma, "Ancient Hinduism as a Missionary Religion," *Numen* 39, No. 2 (Nov. 1992): 175–192; Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*, rev. ed. (New York: Ktav, 1968); William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselyting in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era, the Age of the Tannaim and Amoraim* (Providence: Brown University, 1940).

[29]For a discussion of brahmanical representations of the nature and role of the *ṛṣi*s, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 3.

[30]For an analysis of relevant references, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 2.

opportunity to all nations to receive the Torah, but Israel alone accepted God's offer.[31] Hence the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were deemed to be the custodians of the primordial blueprint, the Torah, and of the divine language, Hebrew, the language from which the world was created and in which the Torah is inscribed.

Veda and Torah thus become incorporated in the collective identity of a particular people and are "reproduced" in the bodies of their descendants through blood lineages.

(2) Embodiment in Social Structure

The process of embodiment also involves the sociocultural reproduction of a particular social structure, in which the social body is internally differentiated and legitimated with reference to the cosmic blueprint. The Word that manifests itself in the structures of the divine and of the cosmos and in a corpus of texts is also held to be embodied in the social structure of the community that constitutes itself in relation to those texts. The Indo-Aryan social order, the system of social classes (*varṇas*), is represented in certain brahmanical texts as reflecting the structure of the Veda, which in turn reflects the structures of the natural and divine orders.[32] The laws of the Torah that delineate and regulate the Israelite social order are correlated in certain rabbinic texts with the laws that generate and regulate the cosmos, a notion that is extended in certain kabbalistic texts to include the laws that constitute the Godhead as well.[33] The social order is thus re-presented as a microcosmic reflection of the cosmic order and as divinely ordained from primordial times as the crystallized expression of the cosmic blueprint on the social plane.

Social status is primarily determined in the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions in relation to the authoritative symbol, and thus the "heads" of the body politic are the religious elite—the brahmin priests or the rabbis—who are themselves represented as the embodiments of Veda or Torah. They embody Veda and Torah, respectively, in their functions, which are to preserve, teach, and enact the canonical texts, as well as in their lines of tradition, which are held to derive directly from the original recipients of the knowledge—the Vedic *ṛṣi*s or Moses. The locus of canonical authority thus shifts from a circumscribed corpus of texts—the Vedic *mantra*s collected in the Saṃhitās and the Sefer Torah—to the religious elite that preserve, transmit, and embody the texts in their teachings and actions. The brahmin priests and the rabbinic sages become the representatives of Veda and Torah, respectively, and they thus assume the authority to redefine the categories in accordance with the changing sociohistorical conditions of

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[31]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 4.

[32]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 1, and n. 38 below.

[33]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 2.

their communities. While preserving the boundaries of the core texts intact, they extend the domain of their respective canons—Veda and Torah—beyond those boundaries in order to incorporate a host of other texts, teachings, and practices.

(3) Embodiment in Practice

Veda and Torah are symbols that are lived and actualized in their respective communities through practice. The sociocultural taxonomies of any community are inscribed in the bodies of its constituent members through practice, transforming the biological body into a socialized body that has internalized the symbolic schemes and values of the culture.[34] In the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, which are religions of orthopraxy, practice assumes a paramount role as the primary vehicle through which social, cultural, and religious values are reproduced. Veda and Torah, as the encompassing symbols of their respective traditions, are inscribed through particular types of practices—primarily through recitation and sacrificial performances in the case of Veda and through study and observance of the commandments in the case of Torah. Moreover, these practices are at times ascribed theurgic efficacy as the means to activate the primordial blueprint and thereby to maintain the social, cosmic, and divine orders.[35]

In the rabbinic tradition the core text, the Sefer Torah, is held to provide the authoritative framework for the community's practices in the form of the 613 commandments, or *mitzvot*, that regulate various aspects of religious, social, political, and economic life. One aggadic tradition correlates the 248 positive commandments with the 248 members of the human body and maintains that there is a specific part of the body that is to be activated in the performance of each commandment. Thus the Torah, as the plan reflecting the structure of the microcosm and the macrocosm, must literally be embodied by each individual Jew through action.[36] While the Sefer Torah is celebrated as the foundation for Jewish orthopraxy, the rabbis were nevertheless faced with the problem of establishing continuity between the ritual and sociocultural practices delineated in the biblical text and the changing religious, social, and political

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[34]See Catherine Bell, "The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power," in *Ritual and Power*, ed. Holdrege, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, No. 2 (Summer 1990): 299–313. Bell's essay draws on the insights of Pierre Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), and Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1979). See also Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[35]See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 5 and 6.

[36]See Pes. K. 12.1; cf. Mak. 23b. For a discussion of this tradition, as well as of other traditions that illustrate the intimate relationship between the body and Torah in Jewish thought, see Paul Morris, "The Embodied Text: Covenant and Torah," *Religion* 20 (Jan. 1990): 77–87.

realities of the Jewish people in different periods and environments. It thus became necessary to adapt the category of Torah to accord with the ever-changing forms of the corporate community that it was intended to represent. Through constructing the category of Oral Torah and linking it to the original revelation at Mount Sinai as the oral tradition of interpretation of the written text, the rabbis overcame the problem of discontinuity. The integrity of the blueprint was preserved, and at the same time its content was opened up and extended through endless acts of interpretation. The rabbis were thus able to ensure the cultural continuity of the Jewish community, as well as their own authoritative position in that community, through transforming Torah from a bounded text into an open-ended symbol.

In the case of the brahmanical tradition the problem of discontinuity posed by the core *śruti* texts, the Vedic Saṃhitās, was even greater than that posed by the Sefer Torah, for the Saṃhitās are primarily concerned with sacrificial rituals and do not provide a system of sociocultural practices. The *varṇa* system, for example, with the exception of a few references,[37] is not delineated in the Saṃhitās. Although the Brāhmaṇas also focus primarily on ritual concerns, the essential functions and hierarchical interrelations of the social classes are articulated in their classificatory schemas, which correlate the structure of the *varṇa* system with the *structure* of the Veda. By extending the domain of *śruti* to include the Brāhmaṇas along with the Saṃhitās, the brahmin priests invested the social system with Vedic authority on the basis of the *content* of the Veda as well.[38] In order to extend Vedic legitimation further beyond the ritual realm into the sociocultural domain, it became necessary to expand the purview of Veda to include not only *śruti* texts but also *smṛti* texts such as the Dharma-Śāstras in which the detailed duties and regulations of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system are elaborated.

The manner in which the categories of Veda and Torah are constructed thus reflects the more fundamental categories that interconnect the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions as two species of the same genus of religious tradition: as ethnocultural systems that define their notions of tradition-identity in terms of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural categories; as textual communities that codify their symbol systems and practices in the form of scriptural canons; and as religions of orthopraxy that delineate their concern for "correct practice" in elaborate legal systems, sacrificial traditions, purity codes, and dietary regulations. The essential feature that unites these various

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[37]See in particular Ṛg-Veda 10.90, the Puruṣa-Sūkta, and Taittirīya Saṃhitā 7.1.1.4–6.

[38]See Brian K. Smith, "Canonical Authority and Social Classification: Veda and *Varṇa* in Ancient Indian Texts," *History of Religions* 32, No. 2 (Nov. 1992): 103–125; Brian K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. chapters 2 and 9.

aspects is that of embodiment: embodiment in a particular ethnic community with a sacred language, social structure, and practices that are constituted in relation to the Word embodied in scripture.

As a heuristic device to highlight further the distinctive nature of these communities, I would like to posit a spectrum of religious traditions, with embodied communities on one end of the spectrum and missionizing traditions on the other end. Embodied communities would include religious traditions that, like the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, define their tradition-identity primarily in terms of ethnic and cultural categories tied to a particular people-language-land-sociocultural system. Missionizing traditions, on the other hand, would include religious traditions that construct their tradition-identity primarily in terms of purportedly universal teachings that are intended for potentially all peoples and cultures. In their early formative periods such traditions are generally concerned to disassociate themselves from identification with a particular people-language-land-culture so that they can spread their teachings across cultural boundaries, beyond a single constituency. Such traditions tend to develop systematized "packages" of knowledge in the form of creeds, doctrines, and practices—for example, the Nicene Creed, the Four Noble Truths, the Five Pillars—that can be easily transported from culture to culture.

It is important to emphasize that in positing a distinction between embodied communities and missionizing traditions, I do not mean to suggest a hard dichotomy between mutually exclusive paradigms but rather a *spectrum*, with the ideal types "embodied particularism" and "disembodied universalism" at either end of the spectrum and a range of possible expressions of ethnocultural specificity in between. On the one hand, as the universalizing teachings of missionizing traditions are appropriated and adapted by different cultures they of course become embedded in specific ethnocultural complexes and assume distinctive forms. Hence among the varieties of "Christianities" and "Buddhisms," we find Spanish Catholics, Irish Catholics, Russian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Chinese Buddhists, Japanese Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists, and so on. On the other hand, in the course of their history members of an embodied community may move from their homeland—whether through forced exile or voluntary emigration—and, while attempting to maintain their distinctive ethnocultural identity and their connection with the sacred language and sacred land of their people, at the same time adapt to their host cultures in a variety of different ways. Hence in the long history of the Jewish diaspora, rabbinic Judaism has assumed variant forms as it has adapted to the local traditions of different gentile cultures—as seen, for example, in the medieval period in the divergent religiocultural traditions of the Sephardi communities of Spain and the Ashkenazi communities of France and Germany.

The distinction between embodied communities and missionizing traditions can perhaps best be illustrated by considering briefly the early formative period of the Christian and Buddhist traditions and these communities' relationships with the

religious traditions from which they arose and eventually separated—the Jewish and brahmanical traditions, respectively. I would like to examine in particular the strategies each of these newly emerging communities adopted, in the process of evolving its own self-definition, in order to disassociate itself from the embodied categories of its parent tradition. Among the range of possible sources for reconstructing the early formative periods of the Christian and Buddhist traditions, I will focus on canonical sources—the New Testament writings, with particular attention to the Pauline epistles, and the Suttas of the Pali Canon, respectively. These texts present *idealized* representations of the early Christian and Buddhist communities and thus provide insight into the ideological mechanisms—although not necessarily historical actualities—of the process through which the religious elite consciously constructed their respective communities' identities over against the parent traditions.

In early Christian traditions the locus of authority shifts from the Word embodied in texts to the Word incarnate as a human being. God's central revelation for Christians is in the person of Jesus Christ himself and not in the New Testament, which is considered a record of the revelation.[39] It is Christ who is celebrated as the preexistent Word of God, the Logos principle through whom "all things were made," and it is the person of Christ, "the Word made flesh," the incarnate God, that constitutes the central symbol of Christian traditions.[40] The Word incarnate in Christ is also held to be embodied in the corporate community of Christians, who are represented in early Christian writings as the "body of Christ." However, this conception contrasts sharply with the notions of embodiment associated with Torah, for the Christian community as the "body of Christ" is not constituted primarily by texts, by categories of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity, nor by practices. Rather, the "body of Christ" is represented as a spiritualized notion of body in which the Christian community is held to be bound together not by blood descent and not by texts and practices tied to the identity of a particular people or culture but rather by faith in Jesus Christ and the "life of the Spirit." This difference in emphasis appears to be rooted in the missionary orientation of the early Christian community, which, in opposition to the ethnic-based categories of the Jewish tradition that fostered it, established a new taxonomy that gave priority to Christ over Torah, faith over practice, and the Spirit over the physical body.

The foundations of this new taxonomy can be located in the writings of the apostle Paul, who, prior to the separation of the Christian church from the Jewish synagogue at the end of the first century C.E., embarked on an extended mission to the gentiles.

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[39]This point is emphasized by Wilfred Cantwell Smith in "Scripture as Form and Concept," p. 30; "Some Similarities and Some Differences Between Christianity and Islam," chapter 13 of his *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981), p. 239.

[40]See John 1:1–3, 14; cf. Col. 1:15–17.

Paul, as a former Pharisee who maintained that he had been specially commissioned by God to be the apostle to the gentiles,[41] was convinced that the gentiles had a legitimate place in God's plan of salvation, yet he was inevitably confronted with the question of their relationship to the Jewish people and to the Torah in particular. In opposition to the "Judaizers" among the Jewish Christians, Paul arrived at the conviction that the gentiles could become part of the people of God without having to pass through the law of Torah.[42]

The doctrine of justification by faith was the main argument developed by Paul in order to defend his conviction that gentiles qua gentiles, apart from the Torah of Israel, have a right to full citizenship in God's kingdom.[43] The key components of Paul's argument involve establishing that (1) for the gentiles the "law of Christ," which is associated with freedom, righteousness, and the "Spirit of life," supersedes the law of Torah, which is associated with bondage, sin, and death;[44] (2) justification is by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works of the law;[45] and (3) the true children of God are not the "children of the flesh," who are bound by the covenants of circumcision and Torah "according to the flesh," but rather the "children of the promise," who are united in the covenant "according to the Spirit" that was vouchsafed to Abraham on the basis of his faith.[46] In order to establish that all those who have faith in Christ—gentiles as well as

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[41]Gal. 1:13–16; Gal. 2:7–9; Rom. 11:13; Rom. 15:15–16.

[42]Krister Stendahl has emphasized that Paul's attitude towards the Torah can only be properly understood in the wider context of his mission to the gentiles. See his *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). A similar view is expressed by Lloyd Gaston in "Paul and the Torah," in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 48–71; reprinted in his *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp. 15–34. For other analyses of Paul's perspectives on the Torah/*nomos*, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[43]Most of the passages in Paul's letters regarding justification by faith appear in the context of his concern with the larger issue of the relation between Jews and gentiles. See Rom. 3:28–30; Gal. 2:14–16; Rom. 1:16–17.

[44]For Paul's extended arguments concerning the relationship of the gentiles to the Jewish people and the Torah, see Gal. 2–5 and Rom. 2–11. It is important to emphasize that although Paul did not expect gentile Christians to be bound by the law, there is no indication that he intended Jewish Christians to abandon the Torah. See Rom. 3:31.

[45]Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:28.

[46]See Rom. 9:6–8; Gal. 4:21–31.

Jews—are heirs to the promise to Abraham, Paul argues that the promise was made solely on the basis of Abraham's faith in God before he was circumcised and was extended to all nations through Abraham.[47]

In the context of struggling with the dilemma posed by the gentile mission, Paul thus developed a conception of religious community that supplanted Jewish notions of embodiment—in Torah (text), flesh (ethnicity), and works (practice)—with a spiritualized notion of the "body of Christ," in which all members of the community, Jews and gentiles alike, are united by baptism into the "life of the Spirit" through faith in Christ.

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.[48]

Paul's theology provided the foundation for a new type of religious tradition, which, in contrast to its parent tradition, was to become characterized as a missionary religion, proclaiming a universal gospel that was open to all peoples and all nations, and as a religion of orthodoxy, in which faith in Jesus Christ, articulated in "correct belief" and elaborated in creeds, doctrines, and theology, was given precedence over "correct practice" and works of the law.

A parallel to the manner in which the early Christian community broke away from the embodied categories of the Jewish tradition can be seen in the manner in which the early Buddhist community disassociated itself from the categories of the brahmanical tradition. In both cases one of the key factors in the redefinition of categories was the missionizing orientation of these new communities, which sought to extend their teachings beyond the boundaries of a single constituency. Just as the missionizing efforts of the early Christian community resulted in the reinterpretation of the role of the Torah and the definition of a new "Israel" in which Jews and gentiles were united through faith in Christ, so the missionizing activities of the early Buddhists were accompanied by a rejection of the authority of the Veda and the formation of a new type

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[47]For Paul's arguments regarding the promise to Abraham, see Gal. 3–4 and Rom. 4, 9.

[48]1 Cor. 12:12–13, 27; cf. Rom. 12:4–5. In *Carnal Israel* Boyarin argues that the "disembodied universalism" advocated by Paul is contiguous with Hellenistic Jewish conceptions in which the essence of the human being is the soul, which is housed in a body. In rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, the essence of the human being is the body. While in rabbinic representations the body is the "very site of human significance," in early Christian appropriations of dualist Hellenistic notions the body is devalued along with the counterparts of corporeality that are central to rabbinic traditions: sexuality and procreation, ethnicity, historical memory, and historical interpretations of scripture. See *Carnal Israel*, pp. 1–10, 230–235.

of community that was united through adherence to the Dhamma (Sanskrit Dharma, "doctrine, teaching"), irrespective of ethnic background, class, or sex.

The Buddha Śākyamuni (ca. 560–480 B.C.E.) and his immediate disciples are represented in the Suttas of the Pali canon as rejecting the authority of the Veda, along with the complex of categories in which it was embedded—textual traditions, brahmanical blood lineages, the *varṇa* system, and Vedic rituals. The early Buddhists are portrayed as spurning the "body"-maintaining activities of the brahmins, which were concerned with preservation of the purity of the physical body and of blood lineages, preservation of a corpus of texts in which the divine language was held to be embodied, maintenance of the social body and its hierarchical division of functions, and regeneration of the cosmos-body through periodic recitation of the Vedic *mantra*s and performance of the sacrificial rituals. The Buddha's followers gave priority instead to the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, which were intended to uproot attachment to all forms of embodiment—to the physical body, to sacred texts, to family, clan, or social status, and to the forms of the material world of *saṃsāra* generally—in order to realize the supreme goal of human existence, *nibbāna* (Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*, literally, "blowing out").

The early Buddhists are represented in the Suttas as establishing a new taxonomy in which (1) the Veda was superseded by the Dhamma as the authoritative symbol of the community;[49] (2) the authority of the brahmin priests, based on purity of descent and custodianship of the Vedic texts and rituals, was supplanted by the ideal of the *arahant* (Sanskrit *arhat*, literally, "worthy one"), whose authority rested on his or her attainment of *nibbāna* through direct experience, through "knowing" and "seeing," of the truths of the Dhamma;[50] and (3) the *varṇa* system, a hierarchy of social classes based on blood descent and householder values, was replaced by the *saṃgha*, an order of monks and nuns that was in principle open to people of all classes and ethnic backgrounds and that was united by the Dhamma, the Vinaya (rules of discipline), and the quest for *nibbāna*.[51]

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[49]See the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (D 16.2.24–26; 16.6.1), in which the Buddha is portrayed as declaring that after his death the Dhamma will be his followers' refuge and teacher.

[50]See, for example, D 13, in which the Buddha is portrayed as deriding the brahmin priests, who teach "a path that they do not know and see" like a line of blind men (13.15), in contrast to an *arahant*, who has realized directly the truths of the Dhamma. See also D 4.

[51]Although in certain passages of the Suttas the Buddha is represented as acknowledging the fourfold division of functions of the *varṇa* system, at the same time he argues that the nature and destiny of the members of the four classes are determined not by birth but by their actions. Hence a person from any of the four classes can abandon the householder duties and class distinctions of the *varṇa* system, join the *saṃgha*, and become an *arahant* who has realized the supreme goal of human existence. See, for example, D 27; M 2.147–154; Sn 136.

In opposition to the brahmins' claim that they are the highest class, for they are the "true children of Brahmā, born from his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā," the Buddha is represented as arguing that his followers, the adherents of the *saṃgha*, are supreme, for they are "born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, heirs of Dhamma."

> [A]ll of you, though of different birth, name, clan and family, who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness, if you are asked who you are, should reply: "We are ascetics, followers of the Sakyan." He whose faith in the Tathāgatha [the Buddha] is settled, rooted, established, solid, unshakeable . . . can truly say: "I am a true son of Blessed Lord, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma." Why is that? Because . . . this designates the Tathāgata: "The Body of Dhamma" [*dhamma-kāya*], that is, "The Body of Brahmā."[52]

The divergence of the early Buddhists from the brahmanical paradigm of Veda can be seen in the way in which they developed the category of canon. The Tipiṭaka ("three baskets"), the Pali canon of the Theravāda school, which is generally held to be the earliest extant, complete canon, derives its authority from its claim to be *buddha-vacana*, the "word of the Buddha," and the repository of the Dhamma.[53] The Suttas, which form the second of the three *piṭaka*s, authenticate their claim to have been "heard" from the Buddha through the opening phrase, *evam me sutam* (Sanskrit *evam mayā śrutam*), "Thus I have heard." However, the Suttas are not thereby ascribed a status comparable to that of *śruti*, "that which was heard" by the Vedic *ṛṣi*s. The Suttas are not, like the Vedic *mantra*s, represented as the record of the cosmic blueprint that contains the expressions of the primordial language through which the creation was brought forth, but rather they are revered as the record of the Dhamma that contains the words of the Buddha through which the message of enlightenment was proclaimed. Indeed, the very notions of a cosmic blueprint and of a primordial language are rejected, for according to the Dhamma the world is in continuous flux, an ever-changing flow of processes, and there are no stable patterns and structures of reality to be mapped and encoded in language. Even if the existence of a language of the gods were conceded, the words of the Buddha would be granted a higher, "supradivine" status, for the

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[52]D 27.3,9.

[53]For a discussion of the formation of the Tipiṭaka, see Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin under the supervision of Jean Dantinne (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 140–191. See also Lamotte's "La critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme," in *India Antiqua* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1947), pp. 213–222. Among more recent studies, see Steven Collins's illuminating essay on the social context in which the Pali canon emerged, "On the Very Idea of the Pali Canon," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 (1990): 89–126.

Buddha, as an enlightened human sage, is represented as having achieved a level of spiritual attainment that surpasses that of the gods.

The Suttas ascribe to the Buddha a conventional view of language, in which language is valued for its communicative power and not for any intrinsic ontological status. The didactic content of the Dhamma, as a universal teaching intended to enlighten human beings and gods alike, took precedence over a single linguistic form. The Buddha is represented as eschewing the use of Sanskrit, the sacred language of the brahmanical elite, and instead encouraging his disciples to learn and spread the Dhamma in their own dialects, in languages that would be accessible to the general populace.[54]

Having examined the ideological mechanisms through which two missionizing traditions—the early Christian and early Buddhist communities—distinguished themselves from the embodied communities that fostered them—the Jewish and brahmanical traditions, respectively—I would like to turn to a brief analysis of early Islamic traditions. The Islamic community (*ummah*) provides a significant intermediary case in that, on the one hand, the community has been missionizing in orientation since its inception, while, on the other hand, it has maintained deep ties with the particular ethnocultural complex—the Arab people, language, and culture—out of which it arose. The intermediary nature of this missionizing-yet-partially-embodied community is evident in the manner in which the early Islamic community constructed the category of scripture, as represented by the Qur'ān.

As in the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, scripture is the central category that binds together the Islamic community. Islam has been characterized as preeminently a "religion of the book,"[55] and the Qur'ān itself, as the eternal Word of God that enters into history, has been compared, both structurally and functionally, to the Torah in Jewish traditions and to the figure of Christ in Christian traditions.[56] The point that is

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[54]Moreover, in contrast to the brahmanical preoccupation with accurate preservation of the Vedic sounds with little regard for their discursive meaning, the Buddha is represented as chiding those disciples who focus solely on memorizing the Dhamma and do not understand the meaning of the texts that they recite. See, for example, M 1.133.

[55]G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol. 2, trans. J. E. Turner (1938; reprint Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), p. 438.

[56]The analogy between the Qur'ān and Christ has been emphasized in particular by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who asserts that "Qur'ān is to Muslims what Christ is to Christians." See Smith, "Scripture as Form and Concept," p. 30, and "Some Similarities and Some Differences Between Christianity and Islam," pp. 238–239, 244–245. See also William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 87, 121 with n. 3; Frederick M. Denny, "Islam: Qur'an and Hadith," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Denny and Taylor, p. 97.

of significance for the present analysis is that the "transcendent focus of Muslim faith" is a text, the Qur'ān,[57] which is characterized in a manner that resonates with certain representations of Veda and Torah: the Qur'ān is celebrated as preexistent and uncreated; as the eternal Word of God that is an attribute of God and, like other attributes, "it is not He nor is it other than He"; and as the repository of the divine language, Arabic. Moreover, the Qur'ān, like Veda and Torah in their respective traditions, is considered the authoritative basis for Muslim orthopraxy and liturgical life, and its teachings have been elaborated in an extensive legal system that encompasses virtually every aspect of religious, social, political, and economic life.

While a number of points of comparison could be delineated between conceptions and practices associated with the Qur'ān and those associated with Veda and Torah, I would like to focus briefly on two significant differences.[58] First, the Qur'ān, although rooted in the notion of a particular sacred language, Arabic, is not thereby tied exclusively to a specific ethnic constituency but is rather represented as universal truth that is to be extended through the Arabs to all peoples. Second, the Qur'ān does not become an encompassing symbol in the way that Veda and Torah do.

The first point of divergence derives from the missionizing orientation of the early Islamic community, which while maintaining that the message of the Qur'ān was originally intended first and foremost for the Arab people, at the same time insisted that it was not to remain confined within ethnic boundaries. The foundations of this universalistic perspective can be located in the Qur'ān itself, in the manner in which the Qur'ān self-consciously constructs the category of scripture.[59] On the one hand, the Qur'ān emphasizes that the divine revelation of Allah to the prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632 C.E.) was intended primarily for the Arab people, who had previously

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[57]Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 87. See also Smith, "Scripture as Form and Concept," p. 30: "It is difficult to exaggerate the centrality, and the transcendence, of the Muslim scripture for Muslim faith."

[58]For a brief comparison of Muslim conceptions of the Qur'ān with other traditions' notions of scripture, see Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp. 84–88.

[59]Arthur Jeffery, in *The Qur'ān as Scripture* (New York: Russell F. Moore, 1952), emphasizes the extent to which Qur'ānic notions of scripture draw upon Jewish and Christian conceptions. He argues that Muhammad took over from his Jewish and Christian contemporaries certain conceptions concerning the nature of scripture, the prophetic office, and the mechanisms of revelation, and used them as the basis for his own interpretation of the role of the Qur'ān as scripture. Among the unique elements in the Qur'ānic conception of scripture, Graham has emphasized its "generic idea of scripture," which was "present from the beginning in Islam as part and parcel of the history of prophecy and revelation." See Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp. 81–84, esp. 83. For a general discussion of the nature and role of the Qur'ān, see Denny, "Islam: Qur'an and Hadith."

received no prophet or scriptural revelation.[60] Muhammad was chosen from among the "unscriptured" (*ummīyūn*) Arabs[61] to be the messenger of Allah who would convey to them an "Arabic Recitation" (*qur'ān*) in a "clear Arabic tongue" so that they would be able to understand.[62] On the other hand, the Qur'ān makes use of a number of mechanisms to establish its own status as universal truth that is the confirmation and culmination of all previous scriptural revelations and that is thus of special relevance not only to the scriptureless Arabs but also to the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*), the Jews and Christians.

The universalizing tendencies of the Qur'ān are evident in its conception of a heavenly Book (*kitāb*) of which the Arabic Qur'ān represents an earthly manifestation. The heavenly *kitāb* is represented in a number of Qur'ānic passages as Allah's primordial record in which all the phenomena and events of heaven and earth are inscribed beforetime.[63] This notion recalls rabbinic conceptions of the preexistent Torah as the plan of creation, although the Qur'ān does not explicitly ascribe to Allah's Book a role in the cosmogonic process itself. In other Qur'ānic passages the *kitāb* is represented as the celestial archetype of all scripture, which is at times designated more specifically as the "Mother of the Book" (*umm al-kitāb*)[64] or the "preserved tablet" (*lauḥ maḥfūz*).[65] In contrast to rabbinic conceptions, in which the primordial blueprint is represented as having a single earthly manifestation in the Sefer Torah, the heavenly *Urschrift* is described in the Qur'ān as an encompassing archetype from which have been "sent down" not one but multiple scriptural revelations, including not only the Arabic Qur'ān but also the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians—in particular, the Torah (Taurāh) of Moses, the Psalms (Zabūr) of David, and the Gospel ('Injīl) of Jesus.[66] The scriptures of the People of the Book constitute only a "portion" of the

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[60]S 32.3; 28.46; 34.44; 35.40; 68.37.

[61]S 62.2; cf. 2.151; 3.164; 7.157.

[62]S 12.2; 43.3; 20.113; 39.28; 41.3; 42.7; 26.195; 16.103; 46.12; 13.37.

[63]See, for example, S 6.59; 10.61; 11.6; 22.70; 27.75; 34.3; 35.11; 57.22; 6.38; 9.36; 50.4.

[64]For references that imply that the Qur'ān itself is derived from the archetypal Book (*kitāb*), see S 10.37; 12.1–2; 43.2–3; 56.77–80; 44.2–3. Regarding the *umm al-kitāb* see 43.2–4; 13.39.

[65]S 85.21–22.

[66]For a discussion of passages in the Qur'ān concerning the Torah, Psalms, and Gospel, see Jeffery, *The Qur'ān as Scripture*, pp. 64–67. With the later expansion of Islam into Iran and India, the Avesta of the Zoroastrians and the Veda of the brahmanical Hindus were also recognized as legitimate scriptural revelations.

archetypal Book,[67] just as that which was revealed to Muhammad is only a partial manifestation.[68]

The Qur'ānic conception of a heavenly Book is thus closely linked to the notion of successive scriptural revelations, in which "every age has a Book"[69] and "every nation has its Messenger," its prophet (*nabī*) or apostle (*rasūl*),[70] who transmits the divine revelation in the native language of his people so that its import is made clear.[71] This might at first be interpreted as an ethnic-based conception of revelation in which each people is "sent down" a scripture that represents its exclusive possession in its own language: just as the Torah is the revelation to the people of Israel in Hebrew, so the Qur'ān is the revelation to the Arab people in Arabic. However, the Qur'ānic conception of scripture extends beyond this, for its conception of the history of revelation is cumulative. Thus, the followers of Muhammad are commanded to believe in the entire Book,[72] both that which has been "sent down" to Muhammad and that which was "sent down" to the messengers before him.[73]

> Say you: "We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender."[74]

Although the above passage indicates that "no division" is made among the messages transmitted through the various prophets, in the end the Qur'ān does make a distinction, for it claims for itself the unique status of the final, culminating revelation sent through the agency of Muhammad, who as the "seal of the prophets" represents the last link in the prophetic succession.[75] The Qur'ān is celebrated as *the* Book, the quintessential scriptural revelation from the heavenly Book, that authenticates and completes all earlier revelations. The Jews and Christians, as the People of the Book,

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[67]S 3.23; 4.44,51.

[68]A number of passages imply that even that which was "sent down" to Muhammad himself was only part of the archetypal Book. See, for example, S 18.27; 29.45; 35.31; cf. 2.231; 17.39.

[69]S 13.38.

[70]S 10.47. See also 16.36; 35.24; cf. 23.44.

[71]S 14.4.

[72]S 3.119.

[73]S 2.4; 2.136; 3.84; 4.136; 4.162; 5.59; 29.46; 42.15; 2.285.

[74]S 2.136. This verse is repeated in 3.84.

[75]S 33.40. See also 2.253, which indicates that Allah has preferred some of the apostles over others.

are thus invited to believe in the Book that Allah has revealed through Muhammad, which not only confirms and safeguards the teachings of their own scriptures[76] but also "makes clear" those matters that have become distorted and that have resulted in disputes and doubts.[77] All those who believe in the Book revealed to the prophet Muhammad are the true children of Abraham and heirs to the promise,[78] and it is this "religion of truth," according to the Qur'ān, that Allah will cause to prevail over every other religion.[79]

The missionizing orientation underlying Qur'ānic representations of scripture is the principal factor that distinguishes these representations from brahmanical conceptions of Veda and rabbinic and kabbalistic conceptions of Torah. In representations of Veda and Torah the Word manifests as a cosmic blueprint with a determinate structure, which is expressed on earth in a single corpus of texts—the Vedic *mantra*s or the Sefer Torah—and is further instantiated in the corporate life of a particular people. Veda and Torah become embodied in the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity of their respective communities, and in particular in the religious elite—the brahmin priests or rabbis—who extend the categories themselves so that Veda and Torah become encompassing symbols that are adapted to accord with the changing nature of the communities that they represent. The Qur'ānic conception of a heavenly Book, on the other hand, presents a universal archetype, which manifests on earth not in a single scriptural revelation to one people but rather in a series of revelations to different communities. The Qur'ān, as the final scripture "sent down" from the archetypal Book, is invested with the cumulative power of all previous revelations and is deemed to be the "religion of truth" that is of universal significance for all peoples. The Word embodied in the Arabic Qur'ān thus does not become embodied in a single ethnic group. Moreover, the

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[76]S 4.47; 2.41,89,91,97; 3.3; 3.81; 5.48; 6.92; 10.37; 35.31; 37.37; 46.12,30; cf. 26.192–197.

[77]S 5.19 emphasizes Muhammad's role as the apostle sent by Allah to the People of the Book. A number of passages suggest that Muhammad's role is more specifically to "make clear" to the Jews and Christians those teachings of their scriptures that have been obscured or about which they are in dispute. See, for example, 5.15; 16.44,64; 27.76; 3.23; 74.31.

[78]One argument that the Qur'ān uses to establish the universal import of its message, which takes precedence over all previous revelations, is to appeal, like the apostle Paul, to the example of Abraham, whom both Jews and Christians claim as their father. Although Abraham is also revered by the Muslims as the father of the Arab people through his son Ishmael, the Qur'ānic assertion that Muhammad's followers are the true descendants of Abraham does not rest primarily on blood ties but rather on its claim to restore the pure religion of Abraham, who is celebrated as the father of faith and the first *muslim*, in the generic sense of one who has "surrendered" to God. See, for example, S 3.65–68. See Jeffery, *The Qur'ān as Scripture*, pp. 75–78, for a discussion of the arguments used by the Qur'ān to establish that the Qur'ānic revelation restores the religion of Abraham.

[79]S 9.33; cf. 58.22.

Qur'ān itself remains a strictly bounded category, a circumscribed text, and does not become an endlessly expanding symbol. The heavenly Book is "closed," the final revelation has been "sent down." The Word of God has manifested once and for all in the text of the Qur'ān, and neither the prophet Muhammad nor the religious elite are ascribed the authority to extend the category of revelation.[80]

Conclusion

In this essay we have moved from a concern with models of scripture—what has Veda to do with Torah?—to a broader concern with paradigms of religious tradition—what have brahmins to do with rabbis? These two concerns are intimately linked, as we have seen, in that representations of Veda and Torah reflect the more fundamental affinities shared by brahmanical Hinduism and rabbinic Judaism as representatives of a distinctive paradigm of religious tradition. The significance of the comparative study of the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions thus lies not only in its contributions to our understanding of these traditions themselves but, perhaps more important, in its broader implications for our understanding of what constitutes a religious tradition. The comparative study of these traditions provides the basis for reassessing and critiquing the prevailing paradigms of religious tradition—which tend to reflect Protestant presuppositions and categories—and for generating new models that bring to light different categories and taxonomies. I have suggested more specifically that one way of rethinking the notion of religious tradition is to posit a spectrum in which religious traditions are mapped according to different degrees of ethnocultural specificity, with embodied communities such as the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions on one end of the spectrum and missionizing traditions such as the early Christian and early Buddhist communities on the other end. A range of intermediary cases could be mapped in between, such as the early Islamic community, which constitutes a missionizing-yet-partially-embodied community.

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[80]The delimited nature of the Qur'ān is illustrated by the Sunnī schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which in determining the principal sources of *fiqh* establish a hierarchy that clearly distinguishes between (1) the Qur'ān, which is the authoritative Word of God; (2) the Sunnah ("custom") of Muhammad, which includes the words, deeds, and gestures of the exemplary human being who was singled out to be the prophet of Allah; and (3) *ijmā'*, the consensus of the community, in particular of the *'ulamā'*, the legal scholars. While the Sunnah of Muhammad ranks second to the Qur'ān as the most authoritative source of Islamic law, it is not granted the status of divine revelation. Moreover, the science of jurisprudence itself, including the books of *fiqh* that classify, interpret, and apply the law, is considered the product of human intelligence. In contrast to rabbinic conceptions of the Oral Torah, the *'ulamā'* are not represented as the embodiments of the Qur'ān whose own interpretations of the text are extensions of the divine revelation. The Qur'ān is a closed category, and Allah alone has the power to reopen the Book that was sealed with the last revelation to the "seal of the prophets."

Judaism and Asian Religions: Editor's Introduction

Harold Kasimow

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Judaism and Asian Religions: Editor's Introduction

Harold Kasimow
Grinnell College

The Dalai Lama taught us a lot about Buddhism, even more about menschlichkeit, and most of all about Judaism. As all true dialogue accomplishes, this encounter with the Dalai Lama opened us to the other faith's integrity. Equally valuable, the encounter reminded us of neglected aspects of ourselves, of elements in Judaism that are overlooked until they are reflected back to us in the mirror of the Other.

—Rabbi Irving Greenberg[1]

This statement on the encounter between Judaism and Buddhism by one of the outstanding Orthodox rabbis of our generation helps us to understand the deep interest and fascination that many Jews have with Asian religious traditions, especially with Buddhist spirituality. The essays in this issue not only examine the interactions of Jews and members of Asian faiths, but they also reveal the diverse interests of American scholars involved in Asian studies. These articles, together with the books which are reviewed here, give us some of the most creative academic work on this subject by Jews and non-Jews.[2] To my knowledge, *Shofar* is the first Jewish journal to devote an entire issue to the strong interest of American Jews in Asian religions.

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[1]Quoted in *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama*, ed. Sidney Piburn (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1990), p. 65.

[2]The reviews include some of the important books on this topic that have appeared in the last fifteen years. I also highly recommend the following recent books: Norman Fischer, *Jerusalem Moonlight: An American Zen Teacher Walks the Path of His Ancestors* (San Francisco: Clear Glass Press, 1995); Bernie Glassman, *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace* (New York: Bell Tower, 1998); Rodger Kamenetz, *Stalking Elijah: Adventures with Today's Jewish Mystical Masters* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).

For a Buddhist perspective on Western religions and interreligious dialogue, I would recommend the works of the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, the two most respected teachers of Buddhism in the West today. I particularly recommend the following: The Dalai Lama, *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus*, ed. Robert Kiely (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995). For an extraordinary encounter between Buddhists and Christians, see Donald W. Mitchell and James A. Wiseman, eds., *The Gethsamane Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1997).

The interest in Asian spirituality shown by many Jews has evoked various reactions. For many Jews, any involvement with Eastern religions is very problematic. They believe that Jews should study only the Torah, claiming that it contains all the knowledge that a Jew should be preoccupied with. Exploring other religious traditions, even if undertaken to enrich one's own spiritual path, is seen to be against the will of God. The view that Jews are not permitted to become immersed in the study of texts that are sacred to other paths must be given consideration. In the Mishnah in *Avot* (5:26), Ben Bag Bag, a convert to Judaism, states, "Turn it [the Torah] over and turn it over, for everything is contained in it."

However, the Jewish tradition is not monolithic. Throughout its history, Judaism has been open to a great diversity of theological views. As Arthur Green has recently pointed out, the Jewish tradition does not have an inquisitor general. Some of its most influential teachers, ones who have profoundly enriched and shaped the Jewish tradition, were influenced by members of other faiths. These include Moses ibn Ezra, Moses Maimonides, his son Abraham Maimonides, Bahya ibn Pakuda, and, in our own time, Robert Gordis and Abraham Joshua Heschel. In the introduction to his work *Duties of the Heart*, Bahya ibn Pakuda writes:

> I quoted also the saints and sages of other nations whose words have come down to us; hoping that my readers' hearts would incline to them, and give heed to their wisdom. I quote for example the dicta of the philosophers, the ethical teachings of the Ascetics, and their praiseworthy customs. . . . The Rabbis further said, "Whoever utters a wise word, even if he belongs to the Gentiles, is called a sage."[3]

It is interesting to note that Abraham Maimonides (1186–1237) was greatly influenced by the Sufis and has much praise for them. Maimonides claims that it is not the Jews but the Sufis who "imitate the prophets and walk in their footsteps."[4]

In his now classic work *God in Search of Man,* Abraham Joshua Heschel, the great spiritual scholar, activist, and theologian of our century, calls for a dialogue between the River Jordan and the River Ganges and asserts that it is "vitally important . . . for Judaism to reach out into non-Jewish culture in order to absorb elements which it may use for the enrichment of its own life and thought."[5] It seems to me that for Heschel Jews who can encounter a sacred text of another religious tradition with open minds and generous hearts can attain a deep understanding that may help them to see their own

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[3]Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart*, trans. Moses Hyamson (Jerusalem: Boys Town Jerusalem Publishers, 1965), vol. 1, p. 45.

[4]Abraham Maimonides, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), p. 321.

[5]Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), p. 15.

tradition in a more profound way. Their insights may also be enriching to believers who hold that text sacred.

The well-known biblical scholar Robert Gordis, a leading figure in the Conservative Movement in Judaism, also encourages dialogue between Jews and members of Asian religions. In *Faith for Moderns*, he suggests how elements of Hinduism may be valuable for the West:

> Yet as a critique of the excesses inherent in the pursuit of the world's physical blessings, the spirit of Hindu thought is perennially valuable. Western religion, reflecting the temper of the civilization in which it functions, is predominantly activistic, but this trait easily passes over into useless bustle and the fever of motion for its own sake. The stress and struggle of achievement often mask little more than acquisitiveness and greed, so that life is robbed of all serenity and peace. Here Oriental religion, with its stress upon the contemplative life as the summum bonum, supplies a much needed balance to the perils of activism. The "truth" lies neither with the West nor with the East, but in a creative tension between the two.[6]

It is clear that Heschel and Gordis are not opposed to the study of Asian sacred texts or face-to-face dialogue with members of Asian religions. But what would their reaction be to Jews such as Maurice Friedman and Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, ones who actually participate in Asian forms of meditation? I do not want to speculate what Heschel and Gordis would have said on this difficult issue. But based on my own experience with Buddhist meditation, I know that it can help to achieve greater mental clarity. I am convinced that Buddhist meditation can be a way for some Jews to develop sensitivity to God and greater insight into and attachment to the Jewish tradition. This has been my own experience.

After spending two summers doing Zen meditation at Kamakura, I reread Heschel's book *Man Is Not Alone*. I saw things in this important work which had totally eluded me during previous readings. It was only after this intense period of meditation that I realized they had been in front of me all the time. Such experiences do not seem to be unusual among Jews who practice Zen meditation. Helen Harkaspi, a committed Jew who teaches Zen Buddhism, speaks of how "annoyed" she was with some of the ideas of Abraham Joshua Heschel and how she came to appreciate him only after practicing Zen meditation. She states, "Ironically, after years of Zen practice, I've come to appreciate Heschel's wisdom and the wisdom of Jewish practice."[7] That Buddhist meditation has led many Jews to a greater appreciation of Judaism seems to be the

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[6]Robert Gordis, *A Faith for Moderns* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1960), p. 295.

[7]Quoted in Judith Linzer, *Torah and Dharma: Jewish Seekers in Eastern Religions* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), p. 198.

central thrust of the two most prominent Jewish books on the subject, ones by Rodger Kamenetz and Sylvia Boorstein.[8]

This is also the case for many other Jews, including Maurice Friedman. In a number of his books, Friedman tells the Hasidic tale of Eizik, son of Rabbi Yekel, who travels from Cracow to Prague in search of treasure. He ultimately discovers, after meeting with a Christian, that the treasure is in fact buried in his family's home in Cracow. Thus, it is a member of a different religious tradition who helps Rabbi Eizik to find the treasure in Judaism, to perceive more profoundly the depth and the uniqueness of the Jewish tradition. In his interpretation of this tale Friedman states:

> Perhaps if we had not gone to "Prague," we should not have discovered that the treasure was hidden beneath our own hearth. There is meaning in our searching, even when it takes us far afield, if it enables us to come back home to the unique task which awaits us. . . . This was my own experience in relation to Judaism. Brought up in a liberal Judaism of a very thin variety, I could never have returned to Judaism and established a new and deeper relationship with it had I not gone through Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Taoism, and Christian mysticism. Nor have I lost these other touchstones. They are part of the way in which I came to Hasidism and relate to it.[9]

Friedman, who was deeply influenced by the Hebrew Bible, Hasidic spirituality, Buber, and Heschel, and who considers himself to be a neo-Hasid, was also deeply touched by Asian religious traditions.

Christians who have been practicing Zen meditation for many years and have worked with *koans* tell us how they have been able to penetrate more deeply into some of the most cryptic passages from the Bible after practicing Buddhist meditation.[10] At San-un-zendo, one of the Zen meditation centers in Kamakura, Japan, as many as half of the people are not Buddhists; many of them are Catholic priests and nuns. Recently the Catholic priest Willigis Jaeger was given the title Authentic Zen Master from this Zen center. Being committed to Christ or to the Torah is not seen as an obstacle to enlightenment. The practice of zazen can lead Jews and Christians to richer spiritual lives.

At the heart of Zen meditation is "to forget the self." This idea is also stressed by Heschel, who speaks of disregarding the ego as a way to encounter God's presence. There seems to me to be a resonance between the stress in Zen Buddhism to forget the

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[8]Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994) and Sylvia Boorstein, *That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist: On Being a Faithful Jew and a Passionate Buddhist* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

[9]Maurice Friedman, *Touchstones of Reality: Existential Trust and the Community of Peace* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), pp. 169–70.

[10]See for example Ruben L. F. Habito, *Total Liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), and J. K. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible: A Priest's Experience*, trans. Joan Rieck (London: Arkana, 1980).

self as a way to enlightenment and Heschel's stress on disregarding the ego as a way to encounter God's presence. At San-un-zendo the teachers obviously do not see that encountering God's presence conflicts with the Buddhist path to enlightenment. Today Jews and Christians who still turn to the East for spiritual guidance are no longer abandoning their own traditions.

The supreme principle of the Torah, according to Rabbi Akiva, is "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This is also a central idea in the Buddhist tradition. What is most central for Rabbi Akiva is for each person to develop a compassionate heart so that one will in fact attain such love for one's neighbor. If Asian spiritual practices can help Jews to grow in their relationship with God, then Jews must seriously reconsider their views of Asian teachers and Asian religious traditions. The study of Asian religions and the practice of some forms of Asian meditation do not lead to a negation of God, but to a more spiritual Jewish life, a life that strives to enhance the power of human love, the power of peace, the power of justice.

If I should ask what I must do to attain such love, many Buddhist teachers would certainly be willing to show me a practical path for working toward such a goal. For example, a Buddhist from Thailand or Sri Lanka would most likely encourage me to do meditation on *metta* ("loving kindness") in order to rid myself of lust and hate and cultivate love for all beings. I believe that today there are many Jews, including rabbis, who are now better prepared to respond to such questions as a direct result of their encounters with the Asian religious traditions.[11]

Soon after my teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel came to the United States, he spoke of the spiritual distress of the Jews in America. I do not claim that salvation will come from Asia, but I am convinced that for many spiritually inclined Jews, Asian traditions may help them to experience their own tradition more deeply. The articles and books reviewed in this issue confirm for me that the current encounter between the River Jordan and the River Ganges, between Mount Sinai and Mount Fuji, is enriching for each community.

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[11]See Avram Davis, ed., *Meditation from the Heart of Judaism: Today's Teachers Share Their Practices, Techniques, and Faith* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997). In this book 22 rabbis and Jewish teachers of meditation discuss their own spiritual journeys. Many describe how Asian meditation has deepened their appreciation of the Jewish tradition. One of the important essays in this collection is that by Rabbi Alan Lew (pp. 43–52). After ten years of practicing Zen meditation, he felt a calling to become a rabbi. Today he is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in San Francisco, where he practices meditation with his congregation. Lew argues that some forms of Buddhist meditation are not necessarily in conflict with Judaism and, in fact, can be very helpful.

Acknowledgments

First I want to express my deep gratitude to Joseph Haberer and Nancy Lein, who invited me to edit this special issue of *Shofar*. I am also grateful to all the contributors, who encouraged me in my belief that authentic interfaith dialogue is possible between members of different religious traditions and can help to bring healing to the world's disparate cultures.

From Legend to History: India and Israel in the Ancient World

Nathan Katz

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From Legend to History: India and Israel in the Ancient World

Nathan Katz
Florida International University

The starting point for this essay is a conundrum encountered while conducting field research among the Jews of Cochin in South India. The Cochin Jews cherish their historical legend which narrates their arrival and prosperity in India. For analytical purposes, their legend has been treated like other myths: as cognitively powerful devices which organize the data of experience, but which are not empirical. However, for the Cochin Jews, the factuality of their legend was of paramount importance.

The paper surveys what is known about ancient historical links between Israel and India and concludes that the Cochin Jews' legend is entirely plausible, that it is perhaps closer to factuality than might be assumed.

Beyond the case at hand, this article attempts some generalizations about indigenous historical traditions, arguing that modern scholars ought to take them more seriously as history than many do.

My uncle was the kosher butcher in Camden, New Jersey, where I grew up. I remember so clearly how he would take me aside and, with more seriousness than his jovial personality generally allowed, would tell me, "Always remember. Always remember that you are a *kohen*."

At times I mused that so many generations passed this secret of *kohenite* ancestry along to the next. As I began to study religions more and more, I became intrigued about the validity of such oral transmissions. Could it be possible that for more than three thousand years the lineage was essentially unbroken, that passed-on memories could have more than sentimental meanings?

Despite Alex Haley's marvel about the general accuracy of the African oral historians' narrations,[1] for the most part modern intellectuals look askance at oral histories. It has become fashionable in the academy to "deconstruct" historical memories and legends, demonstrating that what passes for history is in actuality a construction based on power and interests. For example, the claim that contemporary Jews (especially Ashkenazim) are descendants of the people of the Bible are summarily dismissed by anti-Zionist, leftist intellectuals. We are interlopers, we are told, who insist on asserting that which could not be known objectively, namely that we are actual

[1]Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).

descendants of Abraham. What is such a basic article of faith for Jews, academic scoffers assert, is really a justification for what they consider a form of imperialism, Zionism.

Similarly, some Judaic modernists in the "progressive" movements have abandoned the ritual role of the hereditary priests, and one of the grounds for this break with tradition is the assumption that claims to *kohenite* ancestry are unreliable.

The recent discovery of the so-called "*kohen* gene" is a small bit of evidence that oral history is not necessarily so untrustworthy. By today's assumptions, it is remarkable if not incredible that a three-thousand-year-old oral tradition could be accurate in any literal sense. But that is just what the "*kohen* gene" discovery suggests.

The issue is much greater than whether my ancestor was actually Aharon. At issue is the significance of traditional legends—Jewish or otherwise—for history. The self-perceptions not only of today's *kohanim*, but of all traditional peoples, are the stakes behind the "*kohen* gene" case.

About a decade ago my wife and I spent a year with the Jewish community at Cochin on India's southwest coast. Among the topics we studied was the Jews' stories about how they came to India. We interpreted these stories in terms of how they helped to shape and articulate a seamless, Indian-Jewish identity. As a religious studies scholar conversant with theories about myth, I understood their origin stories much as I understand any myth: as cognitively powerful devices which organize the data of experience, but which are not themselves empirical. In other words, they were good *stories*: they generated status in both Indian and Jewish terms, they articulated a high caste identity, they "domesticated" an extrinsic culture. But they were not history.

But the Cochin Jews themselves would not be satisfied with such a mythic analysis of their own story. During our year among the community, we were asked repeatedly and forcefully whether we "believed" their story, whether we thought they had actually come to India more than 1,900 years before.

This was an instructive incongruence: as modern scholars, our concern was in analyzing the *function* of their legend in the generation of a seamless, Indian-Jewish identity; as participants in the very drama of the legend itself, the Cochin Jews' concern was with its factuality. This incongruence is one which inhabits the intersection between the modern (or, begging the reader's indulgence, "postmodern") scholar as anthropologist, on the one hand, and the traditional world which the scholar studies.

While I affirm our analysis of the function of the Cochin Jews' origin story,[2] I became curious as to whether or to what extent their story might be valid historically. I am not an historian, and I do not know if it would help if I were, but a review of what

[2]See Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin: Jewish Identity in Hindu India* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 1–24.

is known historically can at a minimum put the Cochin Jews' claim into a context, and that context will show their claim to be plausible, even if it cannot settle matters satisfactorily. And the very plausibility of their stories is itself compelling; what we know of history forces us to take the Cochin Jews' stories seriously.

The Cochin Jews' Origin Story

The origin story of the Jewish community at Cochin is proclaimed proudly and clearly: Fleeing the Roman sack of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., some Jews sailed to Cranganore, near today's Cochin, where they were warmly received by the local maharaja. They built synagogues and lived peacefully, piously, and productively until their ancestral home, Israel, and their adopted home, India, attained independence from Great Britain, when they made *aliyah*.

When the fabled Paradesi Synagogue of Cochin celebrated its four hundredth anniversary in 1968, a local artist was commissioned to portray the proud community's history in ten paintings. These were displayed for the visiting dignitaries who attended the anniversary celebrations, including Indira Gandhi. Today the paintings hang in an antechamber of the synagogue. The first four of the series are especially instructive:

- The first painting shows a bazaar filled with spices and ivory, a shipping entrepôt of the ancient world. The caption reads: "There was trade between King Solomon's Palestine (992–952 BC) and Malabar coast. The Biblical name for India was 'Odhu [Hodu]. Teak, ivory, spice and peacocks were exported to Palestine."
- The second painting depicts Herod's temple ablaze, Jews fleeing in all directions. In the lower right of the painting is a ship sailing eastward, to a place on India's southwestern Malabar Coast known to medieval Jewish geographers as Shingly. "Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD by the Romans," the caption reads, "and the consequent dispersal of the Jews to the four corners of the earth from Palestine." The painting's message is clear: the destruction of Jerusalem is also the birth of Jewish life in India.
- The third painting shows a ship full of biblical-looking Jews about to land on a verdant, hospitable coast. Lest there be any doubt, the lower right corner displays a map of India, an arrow pointing toward Shingly: "Landing of the Jews at Shingly (Cranganore) in 72 AD." (See figure.)
- Amidst graceful palm trees, a fourth canvas depicts a king greeting the Jews. The king is attired like an idealized Nayar maharaja, his retinue holding the royal parasol and beating royal drums. "The raja of Cranganore receives the Jews," the caption simply proclaims.

The other six paintings chronicle the Cochin Jews' historical legend: the chartering of an autonomous Jewish community under Hindu sovereignty, an internecine quarrel among the Jews which led to the destruction of silver trumpets which had been brought

Figure 1. This painting, which hangs in an anteroom of the Cochin Synagogue, depicts Jews arriving at Cranganore in 70 CE, having fled the Roman sack of Jerusalem. The painting was executed by local artist S. S. Krishnan in 1968 for the 400th anniversary of the synagogue.

from the Temple itself, the destruction of Cranganore by an alliance of Portuguese and Muslim forces, the migration from Cranganore to Cochin and the construction of the Paradesi Synagogue, the gifting of a Keter Torah (ornamental crown which adorns a Torah scroll) in 1803 by the Maharaja of Travancore, and finally the 1949 visit to the synagogue by the Maharaja of Cochin on the occasion of his abdicating the throne.

These elements depicted in the paintings of the Cochin Jews' historical narrative play key roles in the crystallization of their unique Indian-Jewish identity, as we have noted above and elsewhere. As with any myth, the legend's cognitive power lies in its ability to organize the data of experience.

To return to the question posed repeatedly by the Cochin Jews—whether we "believed" in their historical legend—is to review what is known about the pre-historical commercial links between South and West Asia, about shipping and commerce in the ancient world, about the impact of Alexander of Macedon's travels to India and the exchanges of ambassadors between Greek and Indian kings. It is to review Biblical and Talmudic literature, as well as Buddhist texts and epic poems written in old Tamil, and to look carefully at Josephus and Philo. And when all of the data are reviewed, the Cochin Jews' story becomes all the more plausible.

Pre-history

When the first edition of *The Cambridge History of India* was published in 1922, the oldest known archaeological remains in India dated from the sixth century B.C.E. Historians suspected that there must exist much older remains, and it was during the same year, 1922, that two profound discoveries utterly changed the western world's perception of India's antiquity. Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni unearthed some still indecipherable seals from ancient city mounds at Harappâ in the Punjab, and some four hundred miles to the south, R. D. Banerji began to excavate the fantastic city of Mohenjo-daro, in the Sind.[3] Many more ancient sites were soon to be discovered along the Indus River of what is now Pakistan, and beyond, and the civilization came to be known as the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC).

The IVC was an urban, agrarian, goddess-worshipping culture of unimagined proportions. Its technology was advanced. It produced surplus grains, its streets were regular and well planned, and its cities were prosperous. Its culture was also highly evolved. Commerce was lively, and seals portray an alphabet still indecipherable. Burial practices, sacred images, and the centrality of a ritual complex and purification tank indicate an intricate set of religious beliefs. It was also very, very ancient—as old as Mesopotamia and older than Crete. Radiocarbon dating of the remains indicates a flourishing, urban civilization as early as 2605 B.C.E.,[4] and leading scholarly opinion indicates an origin as early as the fifth millennium B.C.E.[5]

But it is more than the extreme antiquity of the IVC that demands our attention. Not only was it a great urban and agrarian culture, the IVC was very advanced in commerce as well. The Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic, perhaps the world's oldest literary document, dating from the middle of the third millennium B.C.E., refers to a land known as Dilmun (or Telmun), "a holy, pure, clean, radiant land, where there is neither sickness nor death; . . . a place blessed by Enki, the Sumerian water-god, with fresh, sweet water and grain-abounding fields, so much so that it became 'the house of the docks and quays of the land'."[6]

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[3]Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (3rd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 1.

[4]Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 122.

[5]Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 134.

[6]Samuel Noah Kramer, "Dilmun: The Quest for Paradise," *Antiquity* 37 (1963), p. 112. After spending some 25 years studying the relevant literary and archaeological evidence, Kramer concluded that "Dilmun . . . included much, if not all, of that part of Iran, Pakistan, and India on which flourished the Indus or Harappan civilization," p. 111. Other scholars believe Dilmun was a transshipment center for the Mesopotamia-India trade, located on the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain (M.E.L. Mallowan, "The Mechanics of Trade in Western Asia: Reflections on the Location of Magan and Melhula," *Iran:*

Ancient tablets discovered at Ur, the city of Abraham, describe ongoing trade with Dilmun/Telmun, which was an entrepot for trade between Mesopotamia on the one hand and the inner reaches of the IVC, from "Makkan and Meluhha."[7] Seafaring traders, known in Sumerian as *alik-Telmun*, brought silver, gold, and garnets to trade for pearls, ivory-inlaid tables and combs, beads, and especially copper.[8]

In a recent work, Gananath Obeyesekere sought the origin of Pattini, who reigns in Sri Lanka as goddess, virgin, wife, mother, healer for Buddhists, Jainas, and Hindus. In India, he traced her to Cranganore, and from there to west Asia. He concluded that it was with pagan Syrian traders of antiquity that Pattini found her way to India.[9] In his historical research, Obeyesekere trod the same path as one seeking the origin of India's Jews, just as Pattini traveled the same sea lanes and caravan routes as did the merchants and soldiers of ancient Israel, Egypt, Yemen, Greece, and Rome. But all that can be found today are tantalizing hints, probabilities, and plausibilities. Until thorough archaeological excavations are made at Cranganore, that is probably the best we can do.

The data from pre-history clearly indicate that commerce flourished between South Asia and West Asia, including at the city of Abraham, Ur. They provide a background for Biblical, Indian, and Greek literature, which indicates more interaction between India and Israel than commonly imagined.

Journal of Persian Studies 3 [1965], p. 3). Whether on the Persian Gulf or the Arabian Sea, textual references to Dilmun describe a flourishing trade. The discovery of a number of IVC seals in Sumer, according to Kramer, "proves conclusively that there was considerable trade between [ancient India and Mesopotamia]." Not only that, "there is good reason to assume that Indus traders were settled more or less permanently in several Sumerian cities" (Kramer, "Dilmun: The Quest for Paradise," p. 114, fn. 5).

[7]A. L. Oppenheim, "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74 (1954), p. 7.

[8]Oppenheim, "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur," p. 8. Oppenheim argued on this basis for "the well-established links between Southern Mesopotamia—especially Ur itself—and the civilization of the Indus Valley. . . . The discovery of Indian seals . . . and of specially treated carneol beads . . . in Mesopotamian excavations has proven beyond doubt the existence of such trade relations" (Oppenheim, "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur," p. 12). Beyond Mesopotamia, Wheeler suggested links with Anatolia (Asia Minor), Egypt, and the Aegean as well (Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 111). This commercial and cultural intercourse was well established as early as the Pre-Sargonid era in Ur, around 2350 B.C.E. (Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 117)—five hundred years before Abraham!—thus providing our earliest, unequivocal evidence that "the twain" did indeed meet.

[9]Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 530–39.

Biblical Sources

The Hebrew Bible contains both Sanskrit and Tamil words; it both suggests and describes trade between Solomon's kingdom and India. Israeli philologist Chaim Rabin analyzed the Book of Exodus and found therein evidence of trade between ancient Israel and India, direct or indirect. In what is known to scholars as the "P" or priestly sources are no less than four Hebrew words of Indic origin, the terms for cinnamon, emerald, sapphire, and topaz.[10]

The First Book of Kings describes the opulence of the Court of King Solomon, an opulence which the Bible suggests derived from the India trade:

> And all king Shelomo's [Solomon's] drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: that was considered nothing in the days of Shelomo. For the king had at sea a ship of Tarshish with a ship of Hiram: once in three years the ship of Tarshish came, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Shelomo exceeded all the kings of the era for riches and for wisdom.[11]

We find a virtually identical description in Chronicles following a discussion of Solomon's trading and shipping interests at 'Etzion-gever and Elot (today's Eilat):

> And Huram [Hiram] sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Shelomo to Ofir, and took from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Shelomo.[12]

This passage is followed by a description of the arrival in Jerusalem of the Queen of Sheba.[13] Eilat, at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, was one of the chief ports for the ancient sea trade with India. Another route was via northeast Africa, home to the Queen of Sheba, who brought gifts of "spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones," luxuries often imported to Solomon's court from India.

Does the narrative proximity of the arrival of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's sea trade indicate a connection between the two? Was Solomon's marriage to the queen the consolidation of trading interests of both parties? The price of Indian luxuries was compounded along the sea and land routes; it is estimated that their cost rose by some

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[10]Chaim Rabin, "Loanword Evidence in Biblical Hebrew for Trade between Tamil and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.," in *Proceedings of the Second International Seminar of Tamil Studies* (Madras: International Association of Tamil Research, 1971), pp. 433, 437.

[11]I Kings 10:22. Cf. II Chronicles 9:21. All Biblical citations are from *The Jerusalem Bible* (Jerusalem: Koren, 1971).

[12]II Chronicles 8:17–18.

[13]II Chronicles 9:1–12.

1,000 percent by the time the incense, ivory, gems, and spices reached West Asia,[14] so perhaps Solomon and the queen were as united by commerce as by either romance or political alliances.[15] No one knows with any certainty the referent of the name, Tarshish. Was it an Indian port, as suggested by three Hebrew words of obvious Indian origin in this verse, the words for luxuries which King Solomon imported: ivory, apes, and peacocks?[16] Where was Ofir? Might it be the Indian port of Supra near the mouth of the Indus River?

We find a parallel reference in the Buddhist *Bâveru Jâtaka*, a text which refers to the ancient trade between India and Babylon, Bâveru in Sanskrit.[17] In this text, we read "of Indian merchants who took periodic voyages to the land of Bâveru (Babylonia)." Similarly, in the *Kevaddhu Sutta*, a sacred text which tradition holds was spoken by the Buddha himself during the sixth century B.C.E., and which was first written down during the first century B.C.E., "we read of how *long ago* merchants sailed far out of sight of the coast, taking 'shore-sighting' birds, which were released from time to time, in order that they might guide the mariners to land."[18] Not only is this verse reminiscent of the Noah story, but these Buddhist texts tend to indicate a much earlier use of Indian Ocean sea lanes than is commonly believed to be the case.

There is one more connection to King Solomon to be found in Buddhist literature, this from the *Mahoshadha Jâtaka*. In this text, a *yakshini*, or demoness, stole a baby from his mother, intending to eat him. The mother confronted the *yakshini*, but was rebuked by the demoness who claimed the baby as her own. They happened to pass by the judgment hall of the Maharaja of Benares, who was none other than the Buddha in a previous birth. The text reads:

> He heard the noise, sent for them, inquired into the matter, and asked them whether they would abide by his decision. And they agreed. Then he had a line drawn on the ground; and told the yakshini to take hold of the child's arms, and the mother to take hold of its legs; and said, 'The child shall be hers who drags him over the line.'
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> But soon as they pulled at him, the mother, seeing how he suffered, grieved as if her heart would break. And letting him go, she stood there weeping. Then the future Buddha

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[14]Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," pp. 432–33.

[15]*Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), s.v. "Trade and Commerce," p. 1296.

[16]Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," pp. 432–33.

[17]Hugh George Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World from Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 4. Cf. E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse, eds. and trs., *The Jataka; or, Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), vol. III, p. 83.

[18]Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, p. 5. Emphasis in original.

> asked the bystanders, 'Whose hearts are tender to babies? those who have borne children, or those who have not?' And they answered, 'O Sire! the hearts of mothers are tender.' Then he said, "Whom do you think is the mother? she who has the child in her arms, or she who has let go?' And they answered, 'She who has let go is the mother.'

The tale concludes happily. The child is returned to its mother, and the remorseful *yakshini* vowed to follow the five fundamental ethical precepts of Buddhism.[19]

This legend of the Buddha is strikingly similar to the judgment tale of King Solomon.[20] It is impossible to say who is borrowing from whom, or whether both Jews and Buddhists were borrowing from a yet older, common source, or whether this striking similarity was simply coincidental.[21]

Returning to the Bible, we find different Sanskrit and/or Tamil (the Malayalam language of Kerala derived from Tamil at a much later time) loan words entering Hebrew at varying historical periods. Of course, this suggests dynamic trading patterns. In the prophetic books of Ezekiel and Isaiah, believed to have been written during the sixth century B.C.E.—that is, a few centuries after Solomon's time—we find Tamil loan words for cotton, millet, and mulberry.[22] Similarly the rabbinic word for rice derived from the Tamil *arici*, 'husked rice,'[23] as did Hebrew terms for pastry,[24] a mulberry tree,[25] carmine, cotton, and various spices.[26] The Book of Esther contains the Bible's only direct reference to India: in the very first line, we read that King Ahashverosh of

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[19]Thomas William Rhys Davids, ed. & tr., *Buddhist Birth Stories; or, Jakata Tales* (London: Trübner, 1880), pp. xxi–xxvi.

[20]I Kings 3:16–28.

[21]There is another very significant *Jâkata* connection which links Jews and Buddhists, this one very much later and quite accessible to historical inquiry. The entire *Jâkata* literature was made known to the western world by Jewish merchants of the early middle ages. T. W. Rhys Davids described: "[T]he Jews were naturally attracted by a kind of literature such as this—Oriental in morality, amusing in style, and perfectly free from Christian legend and from Christian dogma. It was also a kind of literature which travellers would most easily become acquainted with, and we need not therefore be surprised to hear that a Jew, named Symeon Seth, about 1080 A.D., made the first translation into a European language, viz. into modern Greek. Another Jew, about 1250, made a translation . . . into Hebrew; and a third, John of Capua, turned this Hebrew version into Latin between 1263 and 1278. . . . The title of the second Latin version . . . is very striking—it is 'Aesop the Old.'" (Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, pp. xxx–xxxi.)

[22]Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," pp. 433–34.

[23]Chaim Rabin, "Rice in the Bible," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 11 (1966), p. 5.

[24]Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," p. 435.

[25]Isaiah 40:20, *atz lo-yerqav*. Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," pp. 435–36.

[26]Rabin, "Loanword Evidence," pp. 433–37

Persia ruled "from Hoddu [India] as far as Kush [Ethiopia], a hundred and twenty seven provinces."[27]

The Talmud

The Talmud contains four references to India. The first refers to the ancient pepper trade. Commenting on the verse—"I planted vineyards: I made gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits" (Ecclesiastes 2:5)—to which was added "even peppers," Rabbi Abba Bar Kahana added: "Solomon made use of the winds (*ruhot*) and he sent to India."[28]

A second indirect Talmudic reference to India comes from a later era. In *Pirqei Avot*, the term *pilpul* first was used for the sharpening of the wits through debate,[29] a characteristic of vociferous yeshiva education to this day. The term *pilpul*, debate, derives from the Hebrew for pepper, *pilpeil*, which is the Sanskrit and Tamil *pippali*. Pepper was the most prized produce of India in the Greek and Roman Empires. In fact, an alternative Indian word for *pippali* is *Yavana-priya*, "beloved of the Greeks/ Romans," and it is said that the Roman Empire bankrupted itself due to its love for the pepper imported from India, which quite literally was worth its weight in gold.[30] Certainly during medieval times, and quite likely from ancient times as well, much of the pepper trade between the Malabar Coast of India and the West was in Jewish hands.

In the early tenth century, the great rationalist interpreter of Torah, Saadia ben Joseph (882–942), known as Saadia Gaon, made passing reference to the India trade: "One will find that the ignorant people of our town [Sura in Babylonia] are of the opinion that everyone who goes to India becomes rich. . . . There exist many more ridiculous opinions like these.[31] Finally, the great eleventh-century French commentator, Rabbi Shelomo bar Isaac (1040–1105), better known by his initials as Rashi, mentioned

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[27]Esther 1:1.

[28]*Midrash Qohelet* 1, *Rabbati* 7, cited by Barbara C. Johnson, "Shingli or Jewish Cranganore in the Traditions of the Cochin Jews of India, with an Appendix on the Cochin Jewish Chronicles," Master's thesis, Smith College, 1975, pp. 14–15. Johnson suggested that *ruchot* ought to be read as 'winds' rather than 'spirits,' as is usual practice. She argued that Rabbi Kahana "is thought to have come from Babylonia, so he must have been . . . aware of the Indian origin of pepper. Though *ruhot* is interpreted and translated by all the commentators as 'spirits,' I would suggest that it could also refer, in its more common meaning of 'winds,' to the Hippalus monsoon winds."

[29]*b'pelpul hatalmeideim*, 'sharp discussion with students,' *Pirkei Avos*, 58.

[30]The word for "Greek" in both Hebrew and Sanskrit is the same: *Y'vani* or *Yavana*. The Sanskrit word came to mean any foreigner.

[31]Nissim Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq: 3000 Years of History and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 125–26.

Rabbi Judah from India, a proselyte to whom Rashi attributed several talmudic travelers' tales.[32]

The Greeks and the Hellenized Jews

After the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley and of Mesopotamia, and after Biblical evidence, the next set of data bearing upon the ancient connections between Israel and India comes from Greek and then Roman sources. In discussing these Greek and Roman interactions with India, it is important to keep in mind that Jews were part of both empires and participated in their cultures and commerce.

The earliest Greek document pertaining to India is that of the Graeco-Cairene Skylax, who in 519 B.C.E. was commissioned by Cyrus, Emperor of Persia, to chart the maritime route between the Indus and Egypt. According to the great classical historian Herodotus, Skylax sailed from the mouth of the Indus to the Gulf of Aden, finally reaching the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez. The voyage, we are told, took thirty months—such a long time that he was obviously unaware of the monsoon winds which would have speeded his travels.[33]

Greece's next encounter with India, and perhaps its most significant, was forged by the armies of Alexander of Macedon, who campaigned in India from 331 to 324 B.C.E. Alexander (known in India as Iksander) was followed by more than soldiers: some 10,000 craftsmen, philosophers, artists, historians, merchants, and writers all traveled with him, so cultural and mercantile exchanges were both broad and deep.

The next Greek accounts of India are those of her ambassadors to the Mauryan Court at Pataliputra: first Megasthenes to the Emperor Chandragupta (313–289); and later Deimachos to the Emperor Bindusara (289–264).[34] Megasthenes reported on Buddhist missions to Syria, Egypt, and Macedonia,[35] but he also specifically mentioned the Chera kingdom, home of the Jews.[36]

The Graeco-Egyptian Ptolemies (323–30 B.C.E.) of Alexandria ruled as far as Mesopotamia, from where they explored the Persian Gulf up to the River Indus, according to historian Pliny.[37] By the reign of Ptolemy XII Aulete (80–51 B.C.E.), there

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[32]*Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "India," p. 1350.

[33]Étienne Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," *Nouvelle Clio* 5 (1953), p. 84.

[34]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," pp. 88–90.

[35]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 90.

[36]A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Madras: S. Viswanathan, 1984), p. 19.

[37]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 91.

were permanent island trading stations inhabited by Arabs, Indians, and Greeks in the Persian Gulf.[38]

The rise of Rome meant Roman domination of the India trade, especially the lucrative spice trade which, since the breakdown of the Persian empire, was firmly in Arab hands. In 25 B.C.E. a Roman expeditionary force, which included many Jews as well as Egyptians and Nabatean Arabs, set sail from Suez to wrest trade routes from Himyarite and Sabean Arab monopolies.[39]

The "epoch-making" event which greatly expanded maritime trade with India, however, was the discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippalus, sometime around 45 C.E.[40] These regular winds carried ships from the Middle East to India each spring and propelled their return journey each autumn; travel time was reduced from Skylax's thirty months to just 40 days.[41] Some scholars make more modest claims for Hippalus: that he rediscovered the monsoon, or that he utilized the monsoon on high seas, rather than for mere coastal navigation.[42] In either case, trade and commerce were revolutionized by his discovery.

Having secured both the sea lanes of the spice trade, as well as the overland silk route, the Romans went on to establish their first permanent colony in India at Muziris, "the nearest mart in India."[43] This is of particular interest to Jewish India, because Muziris was also the earliest Jewish settlement in India, known in the Jewish world as Shingly.

Muziris was the great trading and shipping center of the spice trade, located about twenty miles north of today's Cochin. Around 60 C.E., the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, a mariner's guide to the Indian Ocean, noted: "Muziris . . . abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks. . . . [Kings] send large ships to these market towns on account of the great quantity and bulk of pepper."[44] Muziris was descried similarly by Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.), the Roman geographer, and by the Greek, Ptolemy (126–161 C.E.), as well. So important was Muziris to Europe that it was depicted, replete with a temple dedicated to Augustus Caesar, in the fresco maps of

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[38]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 93.

[39]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 95.

[40]Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, p. 109.

[41]P. J. Thomas, "Roman Trade Centres in Malabar," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Centenary Supplement (1924), p. 259.

[42]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 104.

[43]Pliny, quoted by Thomas, "Roman Trade Centres in Malabar," p. 259.

[44]Wilfried Scott, ed. & trans., *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (London: Green, 1912), p. 44.

Rome dating from 226 C.E., known as the Peutingerian Tables.[45] By way of corroborating evidence, "Thousands of Roman coins from the first century C.E. have been found at 29 archaeological sites in South India,"[46] suggestive of a very brisk pepper business.[47]

The esteemed Belgian Indologist, Étienne Lamotte, aptly summed up the rapidly burgeoning trade, as well as a proliferation of trading routes, during the first century: "Along side the older route, from Aden to the Indus delta along the coasts of Arabia and Mekran [roughly the Baluchistan of today], three new routes were rapidly discovered and utilized during the first century C.E.: from Aden to Barbarison or Aden to Barygaza, from Aden to the ports of the Konkan coast, and finally from Aden to the Malabar coast."[48] This large-scale trade was not unnoticed in Indian writings, either. In the *Akananuru*, a first- or second-century Tamil work, we read that "the Yavanas came in large vessels carrying gold and they returned with pepper."[49]

Perhaps a century later, the *Shilappadikaram* described the Chera's capital city: "In various parts of the city the homes of wealthy Greeks [Yavanas] were seen."[50] It recorded "the goods that foreign merchants, leaving their own countries to stay among us, have brought here in great ships," described their "lusty sailors' songs"[51] and how "[a]ll night lamps were burning, the lamps of the foreigners who talk strange tongues who watch over precious cargoes near the docks."[52] It also mentioned the city's busy import trade in wine,[53] Yavanas who were employed by Tamil kings as bodyguards[54] and carpenters,[55] and a temple of Augustus.[56] It is no coincidence, then, that the Cochin Jews believe their settlement was established at Muziris precisely during this century

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[45]Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, pp. 19–20.

[46]Johnson, "Shingli or Jewish Cranganore," p. 13.

[47]Thomas, "Roman Trade Centres in Malabar," p. 260.

[48]Lamotte, "Les premières relations entre l'Inde et l'Occident," p. 102.

[49]Thomas, "Roman Trade Centres in Malabar," p. 260.

[50]Alain Daniélou, trans., *Shilappadikaram (The Ankle Bracelet), By Prince Illangô Adigal* (New York: New Directions, 1965), p. 18.

[51]Daniélou, *Shilappadikaram*, p. 32.

[52]Daniélou, *Shilappadikaram*, p. 30.

[53]Daniélou, *Shilappadikaram*, p. 96.

[54]Daniélou, *Shilappadikaram*, p. 94.

[55]Daniélou, *Shilappadikaram*, p. 81.

[56]Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*, p. 531.

of rapidly expanding trade, especially in pepper and other spices which luxuriated in the Malabar's tropical climate.

In addition to commerce, art, and conquest, the Greeks valued philosophy, and in Megasthenes's view, the philosophers are to Greece as the Brahmins are to India, and so the Jews are to the Middle East.[57] According to Clearchus, Aristotle taught that the Jews are descended from India's Brahmins, making them ". . . the heirs and torch-bearers of the Indian sages, whose disciples they were."[58]

The greatest Jewish historian of ancient times was Josephus, whose writings provide some of our best knowledge of the late Second Temple era. Of particular interest is Josephus' description of the martyrdom at Masada, especially his account of the speeches of Eleazar, the leader of the rebels. Dramatically, as the Romans were about to overrun the defiant Jews, Eleazar argued that mass martyrdom was preferable to capture. He presented a variety of arguments, but the one which convinces his audience to take the fateful step is a comparison of Jewish and Hindu attitudes about death. Josephus had Eleazar saying:

> We . . . ought to become an example to others of our readiness to die. Yet if we do stand in need of foreigners to support us in this matter let us regard those Indians who profess the exercise of philosophy. . . . [T]hese have such a desire of a life of immortality that they tell other men beforehand that they are about to depart; and nobody hinders them, but every one thinks them happy men, and gives them letters to be carried to their familiar friends [that are dead]; so firmly and certainly do they believe that souls converse with one another [in the other world]. . . . [I]n order to their getting their souls a separation from the body in the greatest purity, they die in the midst of hymns of commendations made to them; for their dearest friends conduct them to their death more readily than to any of the rest of mankind conduct their fellow-citizens when they are going on a very long journey, who at the same time weep on their own account, but look upon the others as happy persons, as so soon to be made partakers of the immortal order of beings. Are not we, therefore, ashamed to have lower notions than the Indians? and by our own cowardice to lay a base reproach upon the laws of our country, which are so much desired and imitated by all mankind?[59]

Josephus wrote that the Jews at Masada were convinced by this argument, and the martyrdom then proceeded. But this tantalizing story raises nearly as many questions as it answers: How could Josephus have known what Eleazar said? Were there survivors

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[57]Francis Schmidt, "Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian Model," in Hananya Goodman, ed. *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 47.

[58]Schmidt, "Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian Model," pp. 47–48.

[59]Josephus, *The Works of Josephus, with a Life Written by Himself*, Standard Edition, trans. by William Whiston (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1888), pp. 338–39.

of Masada who gave reports, as his translator, William Whiston, suggests?[60] Was he describing events, or was he propounding his view of the world? How did he become knowledgeable about Indian beliefs and religious practices?

Some scholars emphasize that Josephus was a very Hellenized Jew, as were many from the educated classes of his day. He modeled his histories after the Greek historians, especially Thucydides, and Greeks held India in the highest regard as the home of the greatest philosophers. In both Greek and Indian literature, we read of exciting philosophic dialogues occurring regularly.[61] Therefore, it could be argued that in citing India as a paradigm of philosophic courage, Josephus was doing no more than reflecting a Hellenized world-view. On the other hand, if there had been such sustained commerce between India and ancient Israel for so long—despite an interruption caused by the breakdown of the Persian empire during the fourth century B.C.E.—then Josephus' account might not be entirely Hellenized in viewpoint. Whether via Greece or via direct contacts, it is clear that Jews during the late Second Temple period were aware of Indian spirituality and regarded it well.

Not only Josephus, but the other monumental Hellenized Jewish author of the period, Philo of Alexandria, idealized Indian philosophers or "gymnosophists." In a recent article, Sorbonne scholar Francis Schmidt[62] skillfully distinguished Greek accounts of an Indian philosopher named Calanus and Philo's use of the tale.

According to Greek sources, emissaries of Alexander of Macedon met with two Brahmin ascetics in northwest India. Alexander first invited and later demanded that the two come to Greece to display their wisdom. One of the two refused and is considered intransigent, while the other accepted and is considered courteous. Most sources report that Calanus accepted Alexander's invitation. According to some versions, he committed suicide by self-immolation.

Philo adapts the Greek story for his own anti-assimilationist purposes. In his version, based on that of Megasthenes, "Philo says nothing about the Brahmin who is receptive to the king's proposal. Only the attitude of refusal remains. . . . Philo suggests that, if subsequently Calanus did follow Alexander, he was forced to do so. If he committed suicide by self-immolation, it was not to escape old age or sickness, but rather to free himself from a strange manner of life that had been imposed upon him

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[60]Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, p. 335, fn. 1.

[61]Such philosophic exchanges took place in the wake of Alexander of Macedon's invasion of India during the fourth century B.C.E. One has been preserved among the corpus of Buddhist sacred literature, the *Milindapañha*, in which a Graeco-Bactrian king poses questions to the Buddhist monk, Nagasena. This text was translated from the Pali by Thomas William Rhys Davids as *The Questions of King Milinda (Milindapañha)*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975 [1890]).

[62]Schmidt, "Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian Model," pp. 41–54.

against his will . . . the sage, in choosing death, chooses liberty. . . . [By his innovations on Megasthenes' story] Philo sets up Calanus as a paradigm of the Indian rejection of Hellenism."[63]

Conclusions

Four well-established first-century events coalesce to make the Cochin Jews' own history entirely plausible: (1) the discovery in 45 C.E. of the monsoon winds by Hippalus, which greatly facilitated trade; (2) the defeat of Israel by the Romans, and the destruction of its beloved capital, Jerusalem, in 70 C.E.; (3) Jewish participation in Graeco-Egyptian and/or Roman expeditions to usurp Arab trade monopolies; and (4) the Roman establishment of a settlement at Muziris (Shingly, Cranganore, or Kudungallur), which was known in the western world. In searching for such links in trade and commerce, it becomes abundantly clear that rich cultural links between India and Israel, or between "East" and "West," if you will, existed from ancient times.

Such findings force us to revise at least two of our deeply held cultural assumptions. The first is the very bifurcation of our world into an "East" and a "West." It could be argued that such a view rose concomitantly with imperialism and was articulated in order to justify European domination over Asia (or, over all traditional peoples). If we take this point seriously, then as educators we need to rethink how we teach about history and culture. If we are correct thus far, does it make sense any longer to teach courses in *western* civilization (or in any way to reify the east/west dichotomy) if in fact the idea of a "West" is shown to be more an interested construction than that which is objectively given?

The second assumption which our data question is the purported unreliability of traditional self-understandings as expressed typically in oral history. If we are correct, then we need not only to analyze oral history in terms of function, but to treat it as a history in its own right. The data surrounding the Cochin Jews' origin story, like Alex Haley's encounters with the *gyrots* of West Africa and like the discovery of a "*kohen*-gene," all amount to bits of evidence that oral histories might be more "factual" than is commonly believed to be the case, that the self-perceptions of traditional peoples deserve our meticulous attention rather than our condescension.

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[63]Schmidt, "Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian Model," p. 47.

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Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars , and: *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng* (review)

Yuet Keung Lo

Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies, Volume 17, Number 3, Spring 1999, pp. 135-138 (Review)

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If I were discussing the book with Herman, I would initially raise three issues of varying significance. First, why did he translate Buber's term "*Menschenliebe*" (for "jen") as "humanheartedness"? *Menschenliebe*, or love *between* and toward persons, can only exist in relationship. In its Western cultural context, "humanheartedness" suggests meanings that are too one-sided. Second, in an otherwise methodologically self-reflective text, why is there no mention of the difference in *genre* between *Chuang Tzu* and *I and Thou*, a difference which further complicates the comparison? And, thirdly, why did he relegate Buber's "Foreword" in *Pointing the Way* to a footnote? There, Buber views his work on Chuang Tzu as belonging "to a stage I had to pass through before I could come into an independent relationship with being" (p. ix). Considering that Herman's hermeneutical approach is informed by Buber's dialogical philosophy, he missed an opportunity to further establish his contention that "proto-dialogical instances" are to be found in *Chuang Tzu* by not engaging Buber's own voice in a more direct manner.

Of the three groups of readers who will be most interested in Herman's book—Chuang Tzu scholars, Buber scholars, and comparative religionists—Buber scholars in particular will find this text imperative reading.

Kenneth Kramer
Comparative Religious Studies Program
San Jose State University

Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars, translated, compiled, and edited by Sidney Shapiro. New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1984. 204 pp., chronological table, bibliography and index. $8.95 (p).

Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, by Xu Xin with Beverly Friend, illustrated by Ting Cheng. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1995. 140 pp. $19.95.

Scholars on Chinese Jewry generally agree that the Jews came to settle in China sometime in the tenth century and that the largest Jewish settlement in China was established in Kaifeng, the capital of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). The Kaifeng Jewish community lasted for some 700 years until the nineteenth century, when the Chinese Jews were by and large assimilated and they no longer observed their religious holidays and practiced rituals such as circumcision. Today, there remain about 140 former Jewish Kaifeng families with six surnames in China. Despite its significantly long history in China, the Jews did not receive much attention from traditional Chinese historians. They were not mentioned in any official history until the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) under the Mongol regime—that is, at least five hundred years

after their arrival in China. Inasmuch as we know, the Chinese government showed no prejudice against the Jews as long as they were law-abiding citizens. What, then, accounts for their seemingly infrequent appearances in official Chinese histories?

The reasons are complex, but the ideological constraints on history writing based on the Confucian tradition are often neglected. In traditional China, historians who were employed to compose official histories were, as a rule, steeped in Confucian learning, and the models of historical writing worthy of its name came from the time-honored Confucian tradition dating back even to Confucius himself (479–551 B.C.E.). In order to be deserving of the ink of the Confucian historian, human experiences must be, first and foremost, deemed morally inspiring and thus useful to posterity. Chinese history writing, then, was fundamentally a moral enterprise; history books were intended to be moral guides to a fulfilling life envisioned by the Confucian world view. Under the brush of the Confucian historian, religious doctrines such as Taoism, which was indigenous to China, and Buddhism, which came from India in the first century, were viewed as irrelevant, at best, to the goal of human prosperity and happiness. For this reason, neither doctrine earned much respect or sympathy from the Confucian historian. Records of their beliefs and practices are scarce in official histories. Most of what we know about the two religions comes from the accounts of their followers themselves.

Compared to the community of either the Buddhist or the Taoist adherents, or the native Chinese population as a whole, the size of the Chinese Jewish settlement was much too insignificant to have an impact on the Chinese society in which they lived. Most important, we do not hear much directly from the Chinese Jews themselves. Their voice was somehow quite indistinct. The four famous stele inscriptions (dated 1489, 1512, 1663, and 1679) composed or sponsored by the Chinese Jews acquired their monumental status partly because the materials the Chinese Jews produced for the modern analyst were miserably scant.

In traditional China, "religious practices," tolerated and even appreciated as they might be, were generally considered commonplace and thus often taken for granted; in fact, many of them, such as ancestor worship and paying homage to a local deity in a temple, were practiced by virtually every household. Only when such religious practices became excessive and seditious and were thus considered insidious to the public and threatening to the government would they be condemned or suppressed. The doctrine itself rarely invited any animosity. The suppression, by virtue of being a meritorious act of the powers that be, would usually be recorded, and fortuitously, the condemned religious practices also found their way into official history as negative examples to be avoided. Unlike their Buddhist precedessors and the Jesuits who came after them in the seventeenth century, the Jews in China never took a missionary stance, in spite of the messianic religiosity. Rather, they appear to have been extremely peace-loving, and they tended to be apologetic, often stressing their compatibility with the dominant Confucian culture which was their host. As a result, the Jewish minority created no trouble in

China. Neither did they cause any visible ripple to merit a detailed account in official history. The fact that the Jews as a people were mentioned in the so-called "Biography of the Western Regions" in the official histories indicates that they were primarily viewed as one of the many peoples marginal to the Chinese empire. Even though they actually lived *in* China, they did not seem to make any significant impact on their communities.

If the sources on Chinese Jewry are scarce, the research devoted to them is even more limited in China. The earliest study we have from a Chinese scholar was probably done in 1897 (Hong Jun, "A Survey of the Various Religious Sects During the Yuan Dynasty," included in Shapiro, pp. 3–6). Since the beginning of this century, the history of Jews and their dispersion in China has received more and more attention from Chinese scholars. While the number of scholarly publications remains discouraging, the quality of Chinese scholarship has been respectable. Important new insights regarding the arrival of the Jews in Kaifeng and their differences from the Chinese Muslims emerged every now and then. Almost without exception, these insights were published in Chinese, and for years they have been inaccessible to scholars who are not proficient in that language. Sidney Shapiro has done us all a great service. In *Jews in Old China*, he has compiled and translated thirteen scholarly essays by competent Chinese scholars representing a variety of disciplines including economics, history, sociology, social anthropology, and religious studies. For the convenience of Western readers, Shapiro has edited and summarized these often long and insightful essays with his own useful running commentaries. Some of these essays such as those by Chen Yuan and Pan Guandan [sic] are classic studies which have become points of departure for later studies on Chinese Jewry, including even those by Western scholars.

It is revealing that, the diverse training of their authors notwithstanding, all but one of the essays adopt the historical approach. On the one hand, it seems obvious that Chinese scholars have been busy trying to reconstruct the history of the Jewish people in China because there is still very little research on this subject in their country. On the other hand, the historical approach may well suggest that the source materials lend themselves particularly to critical examination of historical details rather than, say, philosophical exegeses or literary analyses. Since the virtual loss of Jewish identity in China presents the unique case in the Jewish Diaspora, and scholarly consensus attributes it to the assimilation of Jewish culture into Chinese society, how the Jewish identity actually got assimilated is an extremely important issue. However, this issue is barely touched upon in Shapiro's collection. To be sure, the dominance of Confucian ideology as well as social institutions such as the civil service examination system, which was the absolute gateway to a reputable official career and social status in Chinese society, were crucial in facilitating the Jewish assimilation. They help us understand the issue at the macro level. Yet the lack of insights into the psyche of the

Chinese Jews via their written works will make any study of Jewish assimilation inadequate, since the Jewish voice speaking for the Jews themselves is clearly missing.

The historical interest which consumed the scholars in Shapiro's collection is also shared by Xu Xin, and it informs the telling of the stories in his *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*. The questions Xu explicitly asks are: "When, why, and how did Jews come to live in China? Where were they from? What happened to them after they arrived in China? What kind of life did they lead in this far-off land?" (p. ix). Evaluated by this criterion of historical analysis, Xu's *Legends*, albeit highly readable, offers nothing new to the field by a Chinese scholar. In fact, some of the events related in his book are factually incorrect. Whether or not Xu is aware of it, his contribution lies in his methodology of fictionalization. Xu asserts that "oral recollections can capture the past. Legends, stories, and tales can become a people's verdict upon history. Viewed through the lens of legend, the actual events and figures of history assume inflated proportions; as if at the necessary bidding of society itself, they undergo a crucial far-ranging fictionalization" (p. x). In retelling the legends, Xu has to "fill in the gaps and make the stories flow, it was sometimes necessary to invent details" (p. xii). The need and license to fictionalize often afford Xu refreshing insights into the minds of some individual Jews in the momentous challenges they encountered in China. See, for example, Story 3: A Debate Under a Big Locust Tree and Story 7: Bearing the Weight of Tradition.

In his study on the Israelite religion in Kaifeng summarized in Shapiro's collection, Chen Yuan took great pains to cull from stele inscriptions, official histories, local gazetteers, and private literary collections a list of important Jewish figures from the several hundred years of Jewish history in China. The list tells us quite a lot about the political aspirations and achievements of these accultured Jews. Yet none of these Jewish notables seems to have left us any literary or philosophical writings of their own, so we do not know what their contemplative life was like. Xu's legends sometimes creatively fill in this important lacuna in the holistic world of a Jewish individual. Reasonable and credible as it is, whether Xu's fictionalization can be textually substantiated remains to be seen. Perhaps what is missing is not source materials representing the Jewish voice in China, even though it certainly takes time, patience, and a keen eye to search for them. Rather, it is a shift in the critical perspective with which Chinese scholars will comb and examine the source materials. Perhaps if we try to understand the Chinese Jews more at the individual level than the collective level, we can begin to appreciate how some of them felt, contemplated, or even agonized over their individual existence in China, and eventually we can better understand how the Jews as a people had tried to establish a foothold and persist on Chinese soil.

Yuet Keung Lo
Department of Chinese
Grinnell College

Jewish-Buddhist Meetings: Review Essay

Richard G. Marks

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Jewish-Buddhist Meetings
Review Essay

Richard G. Marks
Washington and Lee University

The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India, by Rodger Kamenetz. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. 304 pp. $12.00.

That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist: On Being a Faithful Jew and a Passionate Buddhist, by Sylvia Boorstein. New York: HarperCollins, 1997. 170 pp. n.p.l.

The two books under review here are among several recently published that speak directly or indirectly of a new level of encounter between Jews and Buddhists.[1] Behind these books is a contemporary cultural movement: a small but significant number of American and Israeli Jews are attracted to the sophisticated philosophies and meditation techniques of various forms of Buddhism, mainly in their Western versions. So these books are important as cultural history, but they also deserve to be studied as examples of modern religious pluralism, interreligious dialogue (though it is mainly Jews learning from Buddhists and not vice-versa), and religious philosophy.

Rodger Kamenetz's *The Jew in the Lotus* (a play on the Tibetan national mantra "the Jewel in the Lotus") is a wonderful example of interreligious dialogue. It tells of the journey of eight Jewish leaders to India in 1990 to meet with the Dalai Lama and of Kamenetz's "rediscovery of Jewish identity in Buddhist India" indicated in the book's subtitle. Kamenetz brings alive the adventure, self-questioning, and unexpected discovery that can emerge from meetings with great teachers from another religious tradition. In Kamenetz's admiring portrait, the Dalai Lama, while saying much less than

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[1]Others include *Jerusalem Moonlight: An American Zen Teacher Walks the Path of His Ancestors* (1995), in which Norman Fischer reminisces over the threads connecting his life as a Zen priest to his Jewish origins; David Cooper's journal *Entering the Sacred Mountain* (1994), the last half of which takes place in Jerusalem and at a Buddhist retreat in Massachusetts and in which he reflects upon how Buddhism and Judaism meet through mysticism and offer opposed but complementary spiritual disciplines; and Avram Davis's book on Jewish meditation, *The Way of the Flame* (1996), which contains a brief story of his own meditation experience among Hindus and Buddhists in India before he turned to Jewish meditation.

the Jewish participants, comes across as deeply receptive and engaged, benevolent, powerful in his effect on people, and yet humble, witty, and often humorous (p. 232).

The Jewish-Buddhist dialogue in the book revolves mainly around the two opposing approaches taken by Zalman Schachter and Irving Greenberg (representing, in rough labels, "Jewish Renewal" and "Modern Orthodoxy"). Schachter is the joyous boundary-crosser who engages in "total immersion dialogue" (pp. 29, 73), joining in the rituals of other religions and mixing them into Jewish worship. Speaking to the Dalai Lama, he formulates kabbalistic doctrine in the Tibetan Buddhist framework of view, path, and goal, and seeks Jewish parallels with central Buddhist concepts. For example, he presents the four worlds of the kabbalistic cosmos in a way that teaches the Buddhist concept of the fundamental interdependence of existence, and he argues that the kabbalistic concept of an emanating rather than creating God approaches the Buddhist concept of *Shunyata*, emptiness (pp. 72–90).

Schachter assumes that Jews and Buddhists can discuss views of ultimate reality with each other and learn something important. Yitz Greenberg, on the other hand, like his teacher, Joseph Soloveitchik (and like David Novak in *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*), assumes that ultimate reality is beyond discussion, but feels obligated to discuss urgent ethical issues with other religious communities and work actively with them to further common practical goals (pp. 48–49). Out of an identification with the Tibetan experience of genocide and exile, Greenberg offers the Dalai Lama a traditional Jewish model of how to survive and flourish in exile. He recommends that the Tibetans democratize religious education, give current relevancy to old rituals rooted in Tibet, bring rituals into the home, and become more involved politically. In return the Dalai Lama challenges Greenberg on the same level of praxis: Why use the old rituals yearning for Jerusalem? Do Jews justify anger and violence (pp. 91–104)?

Kamenetz appears in the book as "Everyjew," the average, uncommitted American Jew, defensive and skeptical, bored with an "exoteric" Judaism of lifeless worship services, ethnicity, and the politics of Israel (pp. 57–58, 75, 77), who unexpectedly finds himself transformed by his meetings with the Dalai Lama and the Jewish leaders. He credits Buddhism with offering Jews "a pool of nectar . . . sweeter than a mirror, so that we Jews could see ourselves . . . as we might be" (p. 279). Seeing Judaism reflected in this pool of Tibetan Buddhism, he realizes that it has "its own deep wisdom" and offers as profound a spiritual path as any other. From the Jewish participants, he discovers Jewish prayer as a way of attunement like meditation, Torah as a renewable source of wisdom, and Jewish lovingkindness expressed in reaching out to the Tibetan exiles. He concludes the book with proposals for renewing American Judaism: open up to internal and external dialogue, borrow from other religions, learn from Buddhists how to "deepen" Jewish practice (pp. 280–87). One of his suggestions, using Shabbat as a mini-retreat, is the subject of David Cooper's book, *Renewing Your Soul* (1995). Kamenetz also calls for spreading the knowledge of Kabbalah and its meditative techniques to

American Jews. A burst of recent books on Kabbalah and Jewish meditation have begun to do this (*Miraculous Living, The Practice of Kabbalah, Real Davvening*, and at least nine others published since 1994).[2]

That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist tells how its author, Sylvia Boorstein, came to be, in the words of its subtitle, both "a faithful Jew and passionate Buddhist." She crosses boundaries the way Schachter does. But whereas Schachter always returns to a clearly Jewish home ground, Boorstein maintains homes in both communities. The book consists of 36 short chapters composed of autobiographical stories and reflections, probably the style of the "dharma talks" that Boorstein gives as a meditation teacher. Many of the early personal stories struck me as overly confessional, telling us all her misgivings and indecision along the way to her final conclusions. Yet the book is thoughtful, utterly honest, and often humorous, and it is certainly a courageous book, for she will be criticized for maintaining her dual loyalty. What I found most fascinating, however, was her revisioning of Judaism through her experience of Buddhist mediation. *You Don't Look Buddhist* is an enthusiastic Buddhist *midrash* (exegesis) on Judaism. (On the other hand, it offers no corresponding Jewish midrash on Buddhism.)

Unlike Kamenetz and many of the Jews-turned-Buddhist appearing in *The Jew in the Lotus*, Boorstein refuses to criticize Judaism directly. She remembers fondly her loving Jewish parents and secular Jewish upbringing, but this upbringing, which was just "club membership" (p. 19), failed to address the increasing anxiety she felt later in her life: a fear of loss and pain, a sense of life's fragility (pp. 19, 21, 38). She found in Buddhism a satisfying, rational answer to this anxiety and meditational techniques for integrating the answer into her thinking (pp. 20, 25). But then this Buddhism gradually turned her into "a prayerful, devout Jew" (p. 5): "Practicing mindfulness, I felt peaceful and happy. Feeling peaceful and happy caused me to say blessings. Saying blessings reminded me of prayers . . . and inspired me to pray again. My meditation experiences, especially those that presented themselves in terms of Scripture, reminded me to read Scripture again. . . . My Sabbath practice is a direct consequence of my monastic practice" (p. 143). This is the basic plot of the book, addressed particularly to other Jews practicing Buddhist meditation (p. 2).

Boorstein believes that Buddhism and Judaism teach the same universal truths, which appear in Buddhism in a direct universal form but in Judaism as mythic tribal stories recorded in the Torah (pp. 51, 73). Thus, Jewish theological concepts mirror her Buddhist experience: "revelation," for example, is directly experiencing ultimate truth in meditation (p. 37), and "creation" is non-differentiated emptiness continually being reborn as form (p. 58). Jewish liturgy is a discipline developing mindfulness and "inclining the mind" toward an insight (p. 96). Boorstein also offers many *midrashim*

[2]See: <http://rashi.tiac.net/yihud/biblio.html> for a list.

on the Tanakh and Jewish prayers. "Love your neighbor as yourself" means seeing through the illusion of separateness to share joys and sorrows with all other human beings (p. 99). The *Ve'ahavta* is the lovingkindness (*metta*) practice of Judaism (p. 130). The last line of *Adon Olam*, "God is with me; I am not afraid," addresses her original anxiety: the focused mind in meditation is completely safe (p. 51).

Boorstein "experience[s] God as Source, the Emptiness that gives rise to Form" (p. 52).[3] When deep in meditation, she writes, "I can look into the emptiness of undifferentiated Mind and know it as Source. I can look at elaborated Mind and see it as creation and know that everything . . . is God in temporal, particular form. . . . God as Source and God as Form are inseparable. They are one. Nothing else exists" (p. 54). A Thai Buddhist to whom I showed this passage agreed with Boorstein's picture of ultimate emptiness, but wondered how it could be called "God" or "Jewish" (it didn't sound like anything she had heard Jews say about God). But the idea resonates with Schachter's kabbalistic picture of God found in *The Jew in the Lotus*: the *Ein Sof* as transcendent source emanating worlds of forms, which are thereby also aspects of God. Since some kabbalists call this source *Ayin*, "Nothing," because of its ineffability, we find an intriguing contact with the Buddhist notion of Emptiness. But there is an important difference, as Kamenetz notes, between Buddhists saying that all existence is ultimately empty of inherent reality and kabbalists saying that God exists absolutely but beyond all description (pp. 85–86). Furthermore, the kabbalistic concept of Neo-Platonic emanation does not fit Boorstein's notion, in the passage above (if I understand it), of the role of awareness in giving form and story to the empty flow of phenomena.

Is there anything "wrong" with Boorstein's Judaism, with interpreting creation as the flow of phenomena into form, with prayer as mindfulness, the *Ve'ahavta* as lovingkindness? Is it any different from the Aristotelian *drashot* of Maimonides, the existentialism of Soloveitchik, the Zohar's Gnostic and Neo-Platonic exegesis of the Bible, the way the ancient rabbis replaced the fiery prophetic word with "Scripture" and group exegesis of law? What seems novel, however, about Boorstein's book in a Jewish context is that socially, she affirms allegiance to both the Jewish community and another community constituted by different religious practices (her institutional pluralism), and intellectually, that she interprets Judaism through foreign eyes while offering no critique of the foreign. Maimonides argued with Aristotle even as he adopted the basic structures of his thought, but Boorstein raises no questions about Buddhism. (In her defense, she considers the Buddhist message universally true, not a foreign viewpoint and not different from Jewish doctrine; see pp. 25, 51.)

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[3]Leonard Swidler, taking his cue from Masao Abe's notion of "dynamic Sunyata," argues that Sunyata (emptiness), as the ultimate source of all reality, resembles various Western and Hindu concepts contrasting God as infinite and without attributes with God as manifest. *A Bridge to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, Yagi and Swidler (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 16–19.

Boorstein's Judaism (as implied by her chapter, "This is How American Buddhism Looks") thus seems a local Jewish version of Buddhism, emphasizing prayer and tribal myths, to be compared, for example, with Thailand's local Buddhism, with its merit-making and, for many Thai, veneration of spirits. Why not instead develop further the Jewish side of a Buddhist-Jewish dialogue? Boorstein could explore her contrast between Buddhism as the way of understanding and Judaism as the way of the heart (p. 1), as Avram Davis does in *The Way of Flame* (pp. 51–53). She could explore the system of Halakhah to discover in it more than a mere sign of membership (p. 135), but a discipline and practice, as in her interpretation of Jewish liturgy (pp. 96–97). Why not look to Jewish philosophy and discover Jewish responses to her angst? Or perhaps, as Nathan Katz says in *The Jew in the Lotus* (p. 142), the Jewish tradition does not claim to eradicate suffering, or consider this fundamental to a satisfying life. Abraham Heschel wrote of the existential anxiety of faith, and would have said, I think, that anxiety can turn us toward God, that pathos is part of the path. Martin Buber wrote of the despair that always precedes "the turning" toward the Other. For Arthur Waskow, every deepening of the relationship with God begins with a "wrestling" that moves him toward a higher peace.

Heschel tried in the 1950s to turn American Jews toward a more passionate and engaged Judaism. Boorstein's religiosity reflects his sense of wonder and his search for self-transcendence, but is sweeter and more peaceful. We do not find in it Heschel's sense of human evil, the fiery exaltation of "sacred deed," or the disquieting call to responsibility and social action. God means refuge for Boorstein (pp. 51, 79), not a prophetic calling. Although Kamenetz has since worked hard for the cause of Tibetan liberation, although some American Buddhists have justified charity projects as acts of *metta* (lovingkindness) and *dana* (giving), neither the "interior" Judaism recommended by him nor Boorstein's Judaism offers a clear basis for social action.

So why does Kamenetz, for all his admiration of Buddhism, not become a Buddhist; why is Boorstein not satisfied with a Buddhist life without Judaism? At book's end (and partly as a message to Jews turning to Buddhism), Kamenetz says that he values the Jewish sanctification of daily life ". . . especially through the Shabbat, which brings families together and allows Jews to taste the sweetness of a spiritual life without retreating utterly from the world." Jews need not choose between family life and monastery but can, through Judaism, combine both (pp. 288–89). Boorstein, too, sees conflict between Buddhism and family life. She writes that though the peacefulness of extended meditation retreats appeals deeply to her, she also feels the appeal of family relationships and of a Judaism that fits this and her cultural style and her community (pp. 141, 148). She therefore intersperses retreats into her family life (as do many American Buddhists). What both writers should consider, however, is that Theravada Buddhism (the type that Boorstein follows), in its Southeast Asian form, not only separates monks strictly from family and business affairs and confers great status on

them, but also gives value to the lives of all the other Buddhists, the vast majority who are not monks but have chosen to remain with their families and follow the gentler layperson's path toward Buddhist ideals. Lay Buddhists engage in a complex cycle of acts of generosity, which is intended, *inter alia*, to train them in ego transcendence, learning to give without clinging. Thus, not only Judaism but also lay forms of Buddhism can integrate family life and spirituality. The monks, moreover, would take issue with Kamenetz's picture of them "retreating utterly from the world." And Jon Kabat-Zinn, a medical professor who teaches Buddhist meditation, has co-written a book arguing that the mindfulness of a Buddhist retreat can indeed be combined with "mindful parenting."[4]

Indeed, the Buddhism that both Kamenetz and Boorstein portray is that of a small minority of Asian Buddhists, the monks with their sophisticated philosophy and demanding disciplines. Similarly, the Kabbalah that Kamenetz recommends is today, and has traditionally been in its philosophical forms, the Judaism of the few. I think we need to include lay Buddhists and non-kabbalistic Jews in the Jewish-Buddhist dialogue, and include Greenberg's approach of discussing common ethical issues. We can also learn useful lessons from the work that Christian thinkers have done in the last fifteen years of their own dialogue with Buddhism.

I nevertheless find Kamenetz's and Boorstein's reflections valuable contributions to interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism and an enrichment of contemporary Jewish philosophy and religious practice. Buddhism offers Jews an unexplored source of reflections through which to reexamine everything Judaic on the most fundamental grounds.

[4]Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* (New York: Hyperion, 1997).

Common Symbolic Patterns in Hebrew and in Sanskrit Literature

By Giulio Busi

The philological comparison between Hebrew texts and Sanskrit works has been a rather neglected field in recent years. After a short blossoming of such studies at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a widespread silence fell on Hebrew-Sanskrit philology. This lack of continuity was probably caused mainly by a shift in scholarly fashion. In fact, the late 19th-century positivistic attitude of comparing different cultural areas in order to establish a common pattern of thought has been replaced, during the 20th century, by a more selective look at the different traditions.

The turn of the 19th century was marked by the efforts of pioneers such as Max Müller and Isidor Scheftelowitz, who were deeply interested in understanding both the Indian (and the old Persian) tradition and the Jewish one in their mutual textures. While Max Müller limited himself mainly to general statements about the relationship of some symbolical motifs, Scheftelowitz, a German-born Jew, was probably the scholar who made the greatest contribution to a documented analysis of Hebrew-Sanskrit parallels. Following the method of German philology of his day, Scheftelowitz devoted most of his efforts to collecting textual references in Hebrew and Sanskrit corpora, even if he did not pay much attention to rhetorical data, that is to say, to the actual way in which similar ideas were expressed in Hebrew and in Sanskrit poetical or prose texts.

Notwithstanding such limitations, Scheftelowitz' books on *Arisches im Alten Testament* (1901-3), *Die Altpersische Religion und das Judentum* (1920) and *Alt-Palästinensischer Bauernglaube* (1925)[1] offer quite a large collection of comparative commentaries and can be seen as the first step in a hitherto unexplored domain. When the Nazis seized power, Scheftelowitz was forced to leave Germany. He emigrated to England and died shortly thereafter, in 1934. After him, hardly anyone continued this line of study. Only very recently has Barbara A. Holdrege's seminal book, *Veda and Torah*, offered a comprehensive comparison of some fundamental ideas in Jewish and Hindu religion.[2] Holdrege's analysis, however, is aimed basically at understanding the similarities between Indian and Jewish thought from a religious-anthropological point of view.

In my work, I purposely abstain from discussing any anthropological questions, nor is my starting point historical. It could be said that I am trying to follow the path taken by the scholars of the last century. Nevertheless, while in many

instances using the results attained by Scheftelowitz, I am conscious of having shifted the emphasis from his phenomenological studies of religions to a more strictly philological and rhetorical analysis. The kind of comparison I have tried to work out could be termed a symbolical one. In other words, I am interested in juxtaposing some basic metaphors from Hebrew literature with similar images occurring in Sanskrit literary works. My starting points are not general ideas or broad religious conceptions, but short linguistic strings, usually only a sentence or a couple of sentences both in Hebrew and in Sanskrit that show striking similarities. The parallels that I collect are intended to clarify the symbolical way of thought and the literary strategy expressed in the texts with which I am dealing. I am aware that such a method could give, at first sight, the impression of being arbitrary. However, I am convinced that literary comparison is probably the soundest way to clarify symbolical images only rarely attested within the borders of one particular culture.

The identification of a literary intersection between these two cultures makes it possible to evaluate different symbolical images according to their original standards and to fill the gaps left by often fragmentary traditions. The symbolical formulas can be compared in works from quite diverse cultures and languages. In fact, it can happen that a formal parallel not found within a particular literary tradition appears unexpectedly in a more remote milieu, in this way confirming the meaning of the expression in its first encounter or, even better, precluding false deductions that might have arisen from the symbolical isolation. "Symbolical philology" therefore legitimizes cross-cultural comparisons, but only if they are kept within written traditions, since it is then easier to verify the identity of a particular symbolical syntagma even when it pertains to milieus whose historical links cannot be proven.

A few years ago, in 1999, I published a book on Jewish symbolism (*Simboli del pensiero ebraico*).[3] The goal of my research was to establish a kind of map of Jewish symbolical thinking based on the evidence of Hebrew literature from the Bible to the end of the 18th century. This work led me to appreciate the importance of Hebrew-Sanskrit studies for the correct understanding of some major symbolical issues. Here, I will give a few examples in detail.

Among the many significant cases, it is worth considering Psalm 19, where the morning sun is described "like a bridegroom coming from his wedding canopy." Behind this image is the glimpse of a mythological layer in which the day-planet has the dawn as his consort. This motif, which is not attested to in any other biblical passage, has been analyzed by scholars, who have pointed out a parallel with the Mesopotamian myth of the union between the sun and his bride Aya. Since no Mesopotamian text introduces this image with a comparison formula such as the biblical one, scholars have concluded that the expression "like a bridegroom" voices a deliberate attempt on the part of Jewish culture to distance itself

from pagan anthropomorphism, here retained as a mere rhetorical device. However, this deduction is disproved by the occurrence of an identical phrase in a hymn of the *Rig-Veda*, where the sun follows Ushas, the deity of the dawn, "(just) as the bridegroom follows the bride." In the Vedic verse, the image of the bridegroom is accompanied by the Sanskrit particle *ná* (like), which is the equivalent of the Hebrew prefix *ke-* (like). Thus it is evident that the attenuation expressed by the psalmist in his simile is not ideologically motivated, but belongs to the deep substratum of the solar hierogamy. In this case, an objective evaluation of the biblical passage can be achieved only by expanding the area of inquiry to include the Vedic tradition, which seems to be ignored by biblical scholars more because of the requirements of their specialized field than on the basis of a serious pondering of its contents.

The comparison with Sanskrit literature also sometimes can clarify an occurrence in Hebrew of a particularly rare motif. This is the case of an idea expressed in a single biblical passage, in the book of the prophet Nachum. In this verse, the word "*afar*" (dust), is used to qualify the God of Israel, YHWH, as the storm God, who comes among clouds: "The way of the Lord is in the tempest and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet" (Nachum 1:3).

The image of God who walks in the sky and raises the storm, as if he were traveling along a dusty road, evokes a mythic substratum. Although it is only alluded to in the Bible, the idea of storm gods who proceed amidst thunderbolts and dust is attested to in various oriental traditions. So, for instance, in the Mesopotamic creation epic *Enuma elish* ("When on high...", 109-110) it is said that: "[The god] Marduk created the dust and let the storm carry it."

The hymns of the *Rig-Veda* offer a further particularly detailed example of a similar theophanic use of the word "dust." In a composition addressed to Vata (X.168.1), the wind-god, the divine chariot is praised with the following words: "It moves touching the sky, and creating red sheens, or it goes scattering the dust of the earth." According to the archaic epic, which joined driver and chariot in a single symbolic unit, the god is merged with his vehicle, which arouses storm-clouds in heaven and dusty whirlwinds on earth.

Here, the Sanskrit metaphor completes the assumption of the Hebrew text, where dust is seen as an important attribute of the dynamism of the storm-god. One could say that both the verse of Nachum and the one of the *Rig-Veda* — as well as the more straightforward qualification of the Mesopotamian Marduk as the dust-maker — are fragmentary results of a single symbolical process, starting from the basic pattern of "(divine) storm-dust."

In fact, such theophanic qualifications usually offer a secure field for comparison. This is probably due to the intrinsic cross-cultural quality of poetical theophanies, the constitutive elements of which go back to earliest antiquity. So, the laughing of God represents an element of the divine manifestation widespread

in different cultures, from the Greek to the Latin and to the Persian and Indian. Generally speaking, YHWH's laugh is used in the Bible as an announcement of imminent punishment for human evil behavior. So, in Psalm 37:13, "The Lord shall laugh at him [i.e., at the wicked]; for he sees that his day is coming." In another text, God scoffs at his enemies, venting His wrath at them: "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then he shall speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury" (Psalm 2:4-5). In fact, such a divine fury, here heralded by a sinister laughing, seems to allude to the ominous appearance of a supernatural storm, as is often the case in Biblical poetry. In Psalm 83:15-16, for instance, God's punishment is clearly described as a violent tempest that annihilates the evil doers: "As the fire burns a wood, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire; so pursue them with your tempest, and terrify them with your storm." If we keep in mind that in archaic symbolism the sudden thundering was assimilated to a laughing, we could infer, in the pattern YHWH-laugh/stormy punishment, the surfacing of an almost forgotten metaphor that the Hebrew Bible seems to keep purposely vague and undertoned. Sanskrit literature attests to the theophanic laugh in a much clearer way. For instance, the syntagma laugh/lightning occurs in *Rig-Veda* I.168.8: "The [bolts of] lightning laugh upon the earth beneath them, when the Maruts scatter forth their fatness [i.e., the refreshing rain]." In this case, the comparison with Sanskrit brings us to the very source of symbolic development and provides us with an illuminating foundation for the insecure semantics of the biblical laughing of God. In other words, we can use the eloquent Sanskrit pair lightning/laugh as a cultural palimpsest: the laughing God was at the beginning, in fact, a thundering and lightning God; that is to say also that the biblical divine laugh must be read as a fossilized recollection of an original theophany of the storm-god. However, in the Vedic source the lightning laugh has a clearly positive value — being a propitious showing of light and a promise of rain — while in Hebrew it is tainted with the dark halo of divine wrath.

A further and often rewarding field of comparison is represented by cosmological passages. This domain, too, was characterized in ancient cultures by pronounced cross-cultural tendencies. In fact, Hebrew and Sanskrit traditions seem to share a few common ideas about the structure of the world. What is even more important for us, both the Bible and the Vedas express these cosmological views through rhetorical patterns which are clearly cognate.

The Hebrew Bible describes, for instance, how God laid the foundations of the world, basing it on strong pillars which grant stability to nature: "When the earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved, I bear up its pillars. Selah" (Psalm 75:4). Being the establisher of this cosmic firmness, the Lord is the only one who can decide to alter it, and then for the purpose of punishing evil-doers: "Who shakes the earth from its place, and its pillars tremble" (Job 9:6). Such a cosmic architecture seems to have represented a deep secret of wisdom. In fact, accord-

ing to the biblical lore, God was the only one who knew the inner structure of the world-building. He was the one who built the palace of creation and therefore was aware of every single constructive detail. In the book of Job, the Lord asks a question the protagonist could clearly never answer: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?. . .Upon what are its foundations fastened? Or who laid its corner stone?" (Job 38:4-6). With these words, God intends to state his own incommensurable superiority, since only He, as supernal architect, has seen and arranged the foundation of the world.

The defiant question is echoed also in the Persian Avesta, but with a clear inversion of subject. Here is the man who questions God, in order to be reassured about the secret static of creation (*Yasna* XLIV.4): "This I ask Thee, O Ahura! Tell me aright, who from beneath hath sustained the earth and the clouds above that they do not fall?"

In Vedic literature, the mysterious cosmic support merges in the Godhead, who bears the whole reality within his mystical body: "On whom is firmly founded earth and sky and the air in between; so, too, the fire, moon, sun, and wind, each knowing his own place – Tell me of that Support – who may he be? In whose one limb all the Gods, three and thirty in number, are affixed. Tell me of that Support – who may he be?" (*Atharva-Veda* X.7.12-13). In this text, one of the most intense of the Atharva-Veda, the idea of the cosmic pillar has a strong metaphoric connotation: the column is not an inert element of the world-palace but has personal, almost anthropomorphic features ("In whose one limb..."), and functions as an animated support of the cosmos.

A comparison between the Hebrew, Persian, and Sanskrit texts makes it clear that the question about the pillars of the world belonged to a widespread cosmological lore and represented a common pattern of ancient theology. In this case, the Hebrew tradition seems to reflect an older symbolic stratum that expresses the mythological scheme of the dialogical superiority of God. A shift toward an inner dimension already can be detected in the Avesta, where the question becomes an implicit statement of faith. The move to a mystical dimension has been completed in the Atharva Veda, where the polemic tension evident in Job has been transformed into a reassuring contemplative motive.

A further set of common cosmological features is represented by the description of primordial light as an unformed body. This pattern can be detected in a rabbinical text about the creation of Adam, in which the primordial man is related to the idea of unformed substance or mass: "Rabbi Tanhuma in the name of Rabbi Banayyah and Rabbi Berekyah, in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, said: When the Holy One blessed be He created the first man, He created him unformed [*golem*] and he extended from one side of the world to the other."

The "first man" here is therefore an indistinct shape, a macro-*anthropos*

who extends across the whole sky until he loses human bodily traits, merging with the cosmos. The rabbis did not give an explanation in the *Haggadah* for this immense size of primordial man. This, however, seems to evoke the idea of an intense brilliance dominated by a human figure lacking limbs and thus resembling a fetus.

The combination of these huge dimensions with the idea of light harks back to a very ancient mythological heritage which attributed anthropic features to sources of light, although confining them to entangled figures of pure energy lacking feet and heads. In Sanskrit tradition, the primordial nucleus of light was considered to resemble a fetus in the mother's womb; it was still hidden and barely discernible, but nevertheless full of power and ready to irradiate it with relentless energy. In its hidden aspect Agni, or Fire made divine, is celebrated in the *Rig-Veda* as, "the first born in water, in the depths of the great space, in its bosom without feet, without a head; hiding his two extremities in the bull's nest, he withdrew with strength." Agni is often named *garbha*, Sanskrit for "embryo," a term which also refers to the morning sun, while the dawn is called *apad* in the Vedic hymns, meaning "without feet." Also in ancient Indian culture, incompleteness seems to be the attribute of the maximum concentration of vital energy and to denote the time that precedes the manifestation of existence and the unfolding of light.

The comparison with Sanskrit can therefore bring the rabbinical ideas about the primordial man into a wider phenomenological frame, in which the maximum of potential energy corresponds to a minimum of formal definition. In this case, the Sanskrit *garbha* and the Hebrew *golem* (the word used by the rabbis for unformed matter) seem to be parallel expressions of the same cross-cultural pattern.

Enigmas, riddles, and fabulous stories are a traditional area for comparative studies. It is well known how basic narratives can be traced among quite different cultures, a phenomenon partly due to autonomous literary developments. In some instances, however, the similarities are not restricted to common themes but consist in almost identical rhetorical formulas and in recurring symbols, thus suggesting some more profound relationship. Also in this field, the quest for texts that parallel biblical stories can be extended successfully to reach the Vedic literature. The best such example is offered by the biblical tales concerning Samson. In fact, the book of Judges includes a narrative cycle focused on the image of the lion. Samson, the protagonist, is a solar hero, praised for his strength, sagacity, and cheerful behavior. During the first episode, a young lion comes toward the hero, who, inflamed by "the spirit of the Lord ... tore him as he would have torn a kid, and he had nothing in his hand" (Judges 14:5-6). In the course of the story, the carcass of the animal is wondrously filled with honey. Samson transforms this event into a riddle for the Philistines: "Out of the eater came food, and out of the strong came sweetness" (Judges14:14). Samson's exploits are sung in an epic

tone, which is quite uncommon in the Bible. Similar tales can be traced in various Oriental traditions, and especially in Vedas. Notwithstanding a few different details, an analogous narrative about heroic deeds, where a lion plays a major symbolic role, also can be found in *Rig-Veda*. Here (VII.18.17) the god Indra, according to a curious semantic reversal, kills a lion "with a goat," or, as the text adds, "with the weak work a matchless exploit." In another place, Indra propounds, in an ironical defying tone, a riddle where a lion is trapped by a fox, with an overturning of the customary roles reminiscent of Samson's puzzle. Like the biblical hero, Indra wants to show that his deeds are matchless and no human being can even begin to imitate them.

Here, the Sanskrit tradition keeps the narrative in the realm of the divine, while the Bible lowers the boastful God to the level of a human hero who plays the role of a wonder-working swaggerer. In both the Sanskrit and the Hebrew versions, note the use of the lion as an element in challenging sphinx-like riddles, thus indicating that its function harked back to a most ancient deposit of folk wisdom.

Looking for Sanskrit parallels can also help to clarify symbolic patterns that are marginal or even isolated in Hebrew literature. Rare symbolic patterns are more easily misunderstood than widespread images. These misunderstandings can often lead to errors in the textual tradition so that uncommon ideas are also usually transmitted corruptly. On the other hand, a rarity is also an obstacle to proper critical understanding, because of the greater danger of overlooking the occasional surfacing of a virtually lost metaphor. Here, examine the case of the symbolical meaning of the dove. In Jewish tradition, generally speaking, the dove has a clear positive significance, being used to represent the community of Israel. In a few instances, however, it is possible to uncover a negative evaluation of the dove, on the fringe of the main symbolical stream. Here, a comparison with the Sanskrit tradition is particularly illuminating, since in Hindu lore the dove plays an almost consistently negative role.

In the Bible, the call of the dove seems to have been sometimes understood as a sad lamentation, recalling the cry of mourners at a funeral. Hezekiah, king of Judah, mourns over his sickness in a verse which recalls the name and the sound of the bird: "*Ehgeh ka-yonah*, I moan like a dove" (Isaiah 38:14). In Nachum, the sad note of the doves is used to qualify the lamentations of a group of young female mourners: "Her maidens moan like doves, beating on their breasts" (Nachum 2:8).

A much wider negative development is traceable in the *Vedas*, where the dove is clearly described as the messenger of the death-god. A hymn of the *Rig-Veda*, expanded in the Atharva Veda, preserves a ritual invocation against the ill-omen brought by the bird: "Seeking what, O gods, the sent dove, messenger of perdition, hath come hither, to it will we sing praises, make removal; weal be [it]

to our bipeds, weal to our quadrupeds...May the winged missile not harm us; it maketh its track on the hearth, in the fire-holder; propitious be it into our kine and men; let not the dove, O gods, injure us here" (*Atharva-Veda* VI.27 and VI.29).

The symbolical link of the dove and death, which is only vaguely alluded to in the Bible, dominates in Sanskrit, where — as far as I can judge — no positive attribute of this bird can be traced.

While the dove provides us with an example of a symbolic meaning marginal in Judaism but widespread in Indian lore, the magical and the religious conceptions of the rainbow seem to be mutually interwoven. In post-biblical tradition, it is prohibited to look at the rainbow (e.g., in b*Chagigah* 16a). The biblical idea of the rainbow being the symbol of the pact between God and Israel does not sufficiently explain such a taboo. A deeper reason surfaces in rabbinical literature and is based on a widely diffused symbolic connection between rainbow and penis. In fact, the rainbow merged with the circumcised male organ, which constitutes a further sign of the pact between God and Israel, *ot berit qodesh*. In late antiquity Hebrew, the word *qeshet* was used as a metaphor for penis, as is evident in many talmudic and midrashic texts. *Tractate Sotah* (36b) of the Babylonian Talmud includes, for instance, a version of the biblical romance of Putifar's wife and Joseph, where the expression "his bow abode in strength" (Gen. 49:24) is interpreted as an allusion to the virility of the Patriarch: "R. Jochanan said in the name of R. Meir: [This means] that he had an erection and spread his seed in his hands." Another Talmudic text says that, "Whoever gazes upon one's shame, his virility shall be emptied, for it is written: Shame shall empty thy bow" (*Hab.* 3.) (b*Sanhedrin* 92a), thus making clear the symbolic link between the prohibition to look at the rainbow in the sky and to gaze upon the genitals.

In Sanskrit tradition, the symbolic development of the rainbow seems to be more limited than that in Judaism. Nevertheless, in Sanskrit, too, many details point to a similar link between the bow and the penis. For instance, this link is clearly stated in Atharva-Veda IV.4.6-7: "O Brahmanaspati, do thou stiffen his penis as a bow. I stiffen thy penis as a bowstring upon the bow." Such a link is the most probable basis for the tabooing of the rainbow, which appears at least once in *Apastambiya-Dharmasutra*, where it is stated that one should avoid pronouncing the word *indradhanuh*, (rainbow) literally "Indra's bow." In this case, the comparison between Hebrew and Sanskrit sheds light on the Indian tradition, which, for once, is rarer and vaguer.

The analysis of the symbolical meaning of the rainbow introduces the broad domain of folk beliefs. A large number of magic practices, both in Jewish and in Hindu lore, show common features to such an extent that casual coincidences must be ruled out. In fact, the magic way to understand reality represents a universal form of thought that gave origin to similar developments in the remotest cultural areas. Both Jewish and Sanskrit traditions are characterized by a high

number of literary texts dealing with magic, thus enabling direct philological comparisons in this field as well.

To give an example of these common features, I will discuss briefly a magic ritual centering on the shadow. Already amply documented in the Jewish literature of late antiquity, magic practices using the shadow to foretell the future were destined to have a wide following throughout the Middle Ages and to continue, at least sporadically, until the eighteenth century. The idea that it was possible to read in one's shadow the events hidden in his or her fate has had a very long cross-cultural history whose echo still resonates in various European languages. For instance, the English verbs "to foreshadow" and "to adumbrate" recall the tenacious heritage of an omen which is thought to have originated in the seminal uncertainty of appearances or in the scrutiny of the dark outline of persons or things.

The ritual through which the adept scrutinizes his own reflection in the darkness appears for the first time in a Hebrew text, the treatise *Horayot* of the Babylonian Talmud. It is among the prognosticating practices that must be carried out in the symbolic period between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement: "R. Ammi said:...He who desires to set out on a journey and wishes to ascertain whether he will return home again or not, let him station himself in a dark house; if he sees the reflection of his shadow he may know that he will return home again" (b*Horayot* 12a). Nonetheless, the Talmud adds a note that advises against this practice: "This, however, is not a proper thing to do, lest his courage fail him and he meet with misfortune in consequence."

In spite of the cautions of the talmudic masters, the examination of one's shadow must have been quite frequent among the Jews of the Mesopotamian area, at least in the exoteric circles. In fact, a text that probably dates back to the seventh or eighth century contains the description of a very complicated ritual through which the adept gets ready for a mystical ascent. The final goal is to "wear" the name of God in order to attain a complete dominion over nature. Before facing the dangers connected with the magical operation, the adept is expected to check his own inner energy and, after having fasted for seven days, to go at night to the vicinity of a source of water. After having invoked a sacred name, he has to stare at his shadow, silhouetted in the air. If it is green, the adept is still impure and must fast for seven more days, but if it appears red and brilliant, he knows he is pure and ready to wear the Name.[4]

This practice represents the Jewish application of a magical pattern known also in the Indian tradition, where it takes the name of *chayapurusha*, literally "man of the shadows." The *Shiva Purana* — a work that probably dates back to the first centuries of the Common Era — prescribes that whoever performs the rite must wear a white garment and some garlands, perfume himself with incense and then turn his back to the sun or the moon, observing the color of his own

shadow in the air: if it is white, he is virtuous; if dark, he is impure; if red, he is bound by restrictions; if yellow, he is menaced by enemies (*Shiva Purana, Umasamhita* 28:3-11). Apart from the differences in the evaluation of colors, the Sanskrit text looks strikingly close to the Jewish one, including in the significant switch of the gestures from a simply foretelling context to a mystical one. In fact, in the Hebrew source, the shadow not only predicts the future but also measures the degree of one's spiritual level. Likewise, in the *chayapurusha* rite, the man who can see his full white shadow gains access to all knowledge, as a yogi. Moreover, in the *Shiva Purana*, the omen appears not only in the guise of colors, but also by occasionally noting the adept's shadow: if he sees his shadow without the head, he will lose his faculties in six months; if without the breast, his wife will die; if without legs, he will lose his possessions. Perhaps the absence of feet will portend travel or exile in a distant land, and the lack of arms, the loss of relatives.

It is now clear that, in this common magic lore, the shadow represents a kind of "alter ego" of the physical body. Any variation of the shadow or defect in its shape anticipates the future of its owner, according to codified patterns which are at the basis both of Jewish and Hindu tradition.

The Hebrew magic ritual about the shadow was investigated by no less a scholar than Gershom Scholem in 1953.[5] On the other side, the Hindu text was summed up by the Sanskritist Sadashiv Ambadas Dange in 1989.[6] Nevertheless, neither Scholem nor Dange was aware of the cross-cultural parallel and therefore failed to see the texts they examined in the broader context of ancient magic. This is exactly the point I want to make with this short analysis: to show that symbolical comparison is not just an erudite exercise but often represents the only way to achieve a better perspective on complex cultural phenomena.

NOTES

1. Isidor Scheftelowitz, *Arisches im Alten Testament*, (Eine Sprachwissenschaftliche und Kulturhistorische, 1901-3), *Die Altpersische Religion und das Judentum* (1920) and *Alt-Palästinensischer Bauernglaube* (1925)

2. Barbara A. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996)

3. Giulio Busi, *Simboli del pensiero ebraico*, (Bologna: Università di Bologna, 1999).

4. *Sefer ha-Malbush*, (London, British Library, MS Add. 15.299, fol. 92b).

5. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, (London: Routledge & Kegal Paul, 1965), p. 77.

6. Sadashiv Ambadas Dange, *Encyclopaedia of Puranic Beliefs and Practices*, (New Delhi: Navarang Publishers and Booksellers, 1986) Vol. 4, pp. 1287-1290.